



LOVE  
INTRIGUES  
OF ROYAL  
COURTS

THORNTON HALL







LOVE INTRIGUES

                      
OF

                      
ROYAL COURTS









*Illustrated, William de Robinson*

# LOVE INTRIGUES OF ROYAL COURTS

BY

THORNTON HALL *= printed =*

*ILLUSTRATED*

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# LOVE INTRIGUES OF ROYAL COURTS

## THE FAVOURITE OF AN EMPRESS

CATHERINE, the Second, of Russia, one of the most splendid and the most inscrutable of all the great figures of the eighteenth century, had, says Masson, "two passions which only died with her—her love of man, which degenerated into libertinage, and her love of glory, which degenerated into vanity." For forty years, from the time when she blossomed into the ripe beauty of young womanhood, to the verge of the grave, this remarkable and complex woman had an unbroken series of favourites, on whom in turn she lavished affection, wealth and power, and whom she changed as capriciously and lightly as she changed her gowns.

Probably no woman who has ever lived has exhibited such a wide range of inconsistent characteristics. Voltaire, one of her most abject slaves, proclaimed her "the only great man in Europe, though Frederick is living." "Her soul," he says, "comprehends all things, her mind might serve to measure all capacities. She is the instructor of the philosophers, more learned than all the academies. She is an angel before whom all men should be silent, and where she is, there is Paradise."

And this supreme epitome of all the excellences,

whom Voltaire placed above Solon and Solomon, Lycurgus and Louis XIV., found her lifelong recreation from the cares of empire in flagrant amours and low pleasures, recking nothing, in her autocratic wilfulness, what the world thought of her and her doings.

Seldom, too, has a woman been more richly dowered by nature for the conquest of man. Even as the girl-wife of the imbecile and brutal Peter she had few rivals in beauty in all Russia. Here is the charming picture she draws of herself, arrayed for a ball. "I put up my hair, which was very long and thick and beautiful, at the back of my head, and tied it with a white ribbon, *en queue de Renard*. I set one rose with its buds and leaves, exact imitation of nature, in my hair, and another in my corsage. A ruff of very white gauze was about my neck, and I wore cuffs and aprons of the same gauze. My bodice was of white *gros de Tours* silk (I had a very good figure at that time), with a petticoat of the same over a very small hoop. . . . I never in my life remember having been so complimented by all as on that occasion. I was said to be as beautiful as the day and absolutely dazzling."

Such is Catherine's own naïve description of herself as she stood on the threshold of womanhood. How her beauty ripened in later years is shown in Poniatowski's description of his Imperial mistress at the age of twenty-five. "Her beauty had reached that point which is usually for every woman the highest she attains. With her black hair, she had a dazzling whiteness of skin, a vivid colour, large blue eyes prominent and eloquent,



black and long eyebrows, a Greek nose, a mouth that looked made for kissing, a slight rather tall figure, a carriage that was lively, yet full of nobility, a pleasing voice and a laugh as merry as the humour through which she could with ease pass from the most playful and childish amusements to the most fatiguing mathematical calculation."

To complete the catalogue of her physical charms. "Her hands," says Voltaire, "are the loveliest in the world; her feet are whiter than the snow which is seen in her country." Such was Catherine the Great in the full bloom of her loveliness, which she retained in a surprising degree, in spite of growing stoutness, until her tragically sudden death, on the verge of seventy.

That such an Empress of beauty and personal charm should have the hearts of Europe at her feet is little to marvel at. Her ears were full of flattery; she lived in a world of adulation, almost idolatry, calculated to turn the most evenly-balanced head. But that from her crowd of worshippers she should single one after another for special favour, proclaimed in the face of the world, is as much a perplexity to-day as it was more than a century ago.

Of all Catherine's favourites one stands out from the rest as supreme in fascination, as he was in power over his Imperial mistress. Various stories are told of how Patiomkin first came under the notice and into the favour of the man-loving Empress; but the most authentic is probably that given by Waliszewski, to whose delightful books on Catherine the writer is largely indebted.

When Catherine was reviewing her troops after

the *coup d'état* which rid her of her worthless husband and placed the reins of empire in her hands, a young soldier, noticing that her sword-knot was lacking, rode up and gallantly offered his own, an act of chivalry which won for him an intoxicating smile of thanks. The young soldier, who thus dramatically came into Catherine's life and who was destined to play such a conspicuous part in the drama of her future and that of Russia, was an obscure cavalry sergeant named Patiomkin, who had been dismissed from Moscow University, where he was training for the Church, for idleness and consistent neglect of his "classes," and who had drifted into the army, where he had earned an unenviable character for "dissoluteness of manners and depravity of mind."

It is probable, however, that both the incident and its hero would have been forgotten by Catherine had she not, in search of distraction, chanced to hear of a certain soldier who had remarkable gifts of mimicry and was altogether a most entertaining fellow. Her curiosity was roused; the man was summoned to Court, and was immediately recognised as the Raleigh of the Review day. His mimicry and odd antics—especially his daring and clever imitations of herself—made Catherine laugh until the tears streamed down her cheeks; and Patiomkin's fortune was made. She adopted him as her *protégé*—he was only a boy of seventeen at the time—made a lieutenant of him, had him taught French and the workings of one of the bureaus of the Senate, and generally took his future into her keeping.

At this time Catherine had for favourite Gregory

Orloff, probably the tallest and certainly the handsomest man in Russia, and Patiomkin's reign was still in the future. Years elapsed, the cavalry sergeant had seen much service in the army, had blossomed into a lieutenant-general, and in his despair of ever winning Catherine's more intimate favour had even thought seriously of turning monk, when one day in 1773 he received from her a letter, the significance of which he could not fail to see. After showing marked interest in his campaign, and expressing anxiety for his personal safety, her letter concluded: "In reading this you will perhaps ask why it was written. I can only say—that it may confirm to you my way of thinking in regard to you, for I always wish you every good."

There could be little doubt of Catherine's thinly veiled meaning. Gregory Orloff, so long unassailable in his position of favourite, had been dethroned by his own disloyalty; she had wearied of Vassiltshikof, his successor, and now she turned to the young soldier whose gallantry and amusing tricks had brought him to her notice eleven years or so earlier. Patiomkin went post-haste to St Petersburg; Vassiltshikof was packed off to Moscow; and the ex-sergeant reigned in his stead.

When Grimm timidly ventured to reproach Catherine for this latest exhibition of her fickleness, she retorted, "Why? I suppose, because I have dropped a certain excellent but very tiresome citizen, who has been immediately replaced, I scarcely know how, by one of the greatest, oddest, and most amusing originalities of this iron age. . . . Ah! what a clever head he has, too," she continues, "he is as amusing as the very devil." There is

small evidence here that Catherine's heart was intimately concerned in this change of favourites, which seems to have been dictated rather by the wish to know more of the odd character who had retained her interest and stimulated her curiosity all these years.

If we are to believe contemporary reports, seldom has there been a greater contrast than between this supremely beautiful Empress and the man she now chose to honour above his fellows. Of enormous stature (Catherine seems to have had a passion for big men), he had an unwieldy figure and knock-knees. He was swarthy of skin, coarse in feature, and he had lost one eye, a catastrophe of which the following story is told.

One day, while playing billiards with Alexis Orloff, a man of huge stature and strength, and one of Catherine's discarded lovers, he made some unfortunate remark which roused Orloff's inflammable temper. A quarrel ensued, and the giant dealt Patiomkin a crushing blow, which effectually destroyed the sight of one of his eyes. This disfigurement, which might well have ruined Patiomkin's hopes of Catherine's favour, was indeed a factor in securing it; for he contrived to let her know that he had lost his sight in defending her fair fame, a circumstance which made a powerful appeal to Catherine's sense of chivalry.

Such in outward appearance was Patiomkin, lover-elect of the most beautiful sovereign lady in Europe. "Dreadful and repulsive," was the description of one who knew him; and indeed Patiomkin was so conscious of his lack of physical beauty that for many a year nothing would induce

him to have his portrait painted; and it was only at the pleading of the Empress that he at last consented to sit for the portrait which may be seen to-day in the Winter Palace of St Petersburg—a flattering presentment which certainly does not support contemporary description.

But, unattractive as the man was physically, his habits were still less pleasant. “His merriment is boisterous,” says a chronicler, “and he has also the habit of biting his nails and scratching his untidy head. He often passes whole days in his room, half-dressed, uncombed, unwashed, biting his nails. A great eater and drinker, but swallowing without apparent distinction the most delicate and elaborate dishes, he has always at hand, even on his night-table, a supply of *pirojki* (little pasties), and drains down bottles of *kvass* by the dozen.

“When he is travelling, he lives on garlic and black bread, but at St Petersburg, at Kief or at Jassy, his table is served with the most *recherché* dishes of all countries, oysters, and sterlets, figs from Provence and water-melons from Astrakhan. When he is not in full court-dress, he generally wears a large dressing-gown, in which he even receives ladies, and, in the country, gives audience and presides at official dinners. Under this full and easy garment he wears neither trousers nor drawers.

“When he is not bare-legged in his dressing-gown he is seen in clothes embroidered with gold on all seams, covered with diamonds, and constellated with badges. He invents for his own use extravagant uniforms, astounding trappings for horses, plumes as high as the roof.”

What was the secret of the ascendancy of this grotesque creature over one of the cleverest women in Europe? "In his youth," says Segur, "he pleased her by the ardour of his passion; at a more advanced period of his life he continued to charm her by flattering her pride, by calming her apprehensiveness, by caressing her dreams of Oriental Empire."

Whatever the reason was it is quite certain that this repulsive ex-sergeant and buffoon quickly acquired an absolute ascendancy over the Empress, who became his humble slave. "She is quite crazy over him," says Durand, as indeed is clearly proved by her passionate letters, in which she addresses him as "My Soul," "My King," "My inestimable Treasure." And this ardour was, until he had made sure of his victim, reciprocated by Patiomkin, whose letters are like the ravings of a lovesick boy. "When first I beheld thee," he writes, "my thoughts were only of thee. Thy glorious eyes made me captive, yet I trembled to breathe my love. Ye cruel gods! why did you dower her with such witchery, or why did you so exalt her beyond my reach? Why did you destine me to love her, and only her, whose sacred name will never pass my lips, whose charming image will never quit my heart?"

If he smiled she was transported to heaven; his frowns drove her to despair and tears. His very callousness and brutality in later days served but to fan the flame of her infatuation. Once, when sitting at the table with her, he not only refused to speak, but even to answer her questions. "She was beside herself," says one who was present; "and we, for our part, were very much put out of

countenance. On rising from table the Empress retired alone, and reappeared with red eyes and a troubled air." So little respect in fact did he show his royal mistress that he thought nothing of appearing in her presence unwashed, unkempt, with bare legs and loose dressing-gown—a breach of elementary decorum which she never dared resent.

Thus secure of his mistress's favour, he lost no time in making her infatuation minister to his advancement. The highest honours were showered on him. He became dictator of the home and foreign policy of the empire, head of the army, Grand Admiral of the Fleet, and virtual Emperor. All the titles Catherine had at her disposal were his without the asking; she gave him palaces, vast estates, and millions of roubles; his uniforms blazed with the most coveted decorations; Joseph II. procured for him a Princship of the Holy Roman Empire; and the Empress gave him a portrait of herself framed in diamonds, a distinction which only one other man—Gregory Orloff—had ever enjoyed. Thus within two brief years the quondam trooper was raised to a higher pinnacle of favour, wealth and dignities than any other man in Europe—the tribute of an adoring woman to a brutal, ill-favoured lover.

But his insatiable ambition was far from satisfied. He was already an emperor in power, why should he not be emperor in name, as the avowed husband of the lady whose heart was his subject?

The opportunity for this crowning and crucial cast of the die came when Catherine set out on a pilgrimage to the monastery of Troitza to atone for her shortcomings by a few weeks' fasting and piety.

Patiomkin accompanied her and chose this time of chastening for the *grand coup* which was to make him Tsar—to replace the *rôle* of lover by that of husband. Casting aside his brilliant uniform he attired himself as a monk, chanted psalms before day dawned and was singing vespers when the sun set. One day, when he considered the time was ripe, he presented himself before the Empress, his tall gaunt figure worn from fasts, and bent with remorse, and clad in the garb of a monk, and announced to her that he had decided to abandon the pomps and vanities of the world to seek peace in the cloister. To his dismay Catherine, instead of imploring him to reconsider his decision and offering him her hand, approved of his project; assured him that he was acting wisely in seeking the salvation of his soul—and promptly returned to Court, leaving him secretly raging at his discomfiture.

Three weeks later she was amazed to see the penitent monk, in his finest feathers, stalk into the room where she was playing cards with her ladies and coolly take a seat at her table. Fixing his eyes on the surprised Empress he stretched forth one hand and cut the cards, showing her that which he had turned up. “You were always lucky,” was her only comment, as she began to deal. And thus, with scarcely a word spoken, Patiomkin restored himself to his old position of power.

The lesson, however, was not lost on the astute and far-seeing Prince. It showed him that his tenure of the Empress’s inconsistent heart was by no means as secure and permanent as he had imagined. She had wearied of many a former lover far more attractive than himself. He could after



all scarcely hope to escape their fate. Already Catherine's eyes had looked with favour on Zavadofsky, a handsome young secretary whom she had taken into her service, and who, he grew convinced, was destined to be his successor. The crisis was precipitated sooner than he expected. He absented himself for a few weeks' tour of inspection in the province of Novgorod; and returned to find his youthful rival installed in his place.

Patiomkin stormed and raved at his dismissal, drove Catherine into hysterics by his tempestuous rage, and effectually frightened her into confirming him in his power and dignities while depriving him of her affection. And this was all he cared for. Let anyone who would be lover, so long as he could be Emperor; and when this point was once gained he became once more the silver-tongued courtier and the ambassador of Catherine's passions, finding as much pleasure in providing for her a succession of lovers as in playing the insecure *rôle* himself.

More than he had lost in Catherine's affection he now gained in power and influence over her; and, curiously enough, he became in form, if no longer in fact, her adorer more than ever. When away on campaign he wrote to her such messages as these: "This is what it is to write at a thousand versts apart! My joyous soul would but express to you, for an instant, its desire to set you free of the one single thing which could lessen the greatness of yours." "Merciful mother! you have already poured upon me all the gifts which you have to give, and I still am alive; but this life, august sovereign, shall ever be, believe me, ever and always, a sacrifice in your service and against your enemies."

And Catherine's replies were in a similar strain of romantic devotion, as when she wrote, "There is nothing sweet, my friend, that I would not say to you."

Thus secure in her friendship, which was ever far more constant than her love, Patiomkin gave full play to his passion for power and for extravagance, and to his indulgence in the pleasures, many of them base, of life; while his eccentricities, which verged on madness, became more marked than ever. While he was ostensibly conducting the war against Turkey, he spent most of his time, Langeron says, "in polishing his diamonds, and sending bouquets and presents to the object of his love and the other ladies of the court. He made his triumphal progress with a retinue of five or six hundred servants, two hundred musicians, a *corps de ballet*, a troupe of mimes, a hundred embroiderers and twenty jewellers."

Even more remarkable than his love of display were his varied and conflicting moods, which seem to suggest a mind unhinged. "Within a single hour," we are told, "he will be gay, sad, playful, pensive, caressing, storming, welcoming amiably, repulsing rudely, giving an order and revoking it." At one time when a battle was raging he would hide in a cellar and shut his ears against the roar of the cannon; at another he would stand without a tremor in the trenches while the death-dealing bullets whistled past his ears.

Emancipated from Catherine's exacting affection he gave full rein to his passion for fair women, and revelled in the luxurious life of a sultan—even on the borders of battlefields. "On a divan of pink

and silver stuff," to quote Langeron again, "fringed and ornamented with flowers and ribbons, the prince was seated in a *negligé* as gallant as it was *recherché* by the side of the object of his vows, and surrounded by five or six women whose beauty was increased by the beauty of their garb, and before whom burned perfumes in golden dishes. A collation, served in silver-gilt vessels, occupied the centre of the room." The queen of the moment was Princess Dolgornki, wife of one of his officers, as were many of her fair if frail successors in Patiomkin's affections.

Balls and suppers, on a scale of regal splendour, followed each other in endless succession. Patiomkin took his pleasure thus while his armies fought and fell to add fresh laurels to his crown; and such time as he could spare from these dissipations he spent at the house of one or the other of his favourites, the wives of officers absent on duty. "There," to quote an eye-witness, "given over entirely to his loves, a regular Sultan in the midst of his harem, he refuses to see anyone but a certain number of his flatterers. The rooms (in the house of the Countess Galvin) are divided into two; in the first are the men about the gaming-tables; in the second the prince on a divan with the ladies."

Catherine, always tolerant in such matters, so far from feeling annoyance at Patiomkin's scandalous love affairs, appears to have viewed them with sympathy and interest. As Waliszewski says, "if he concerns himself with her pleasures and even her amours, she returns him the compliment. The detail is certainly repulsive; it has, however, its place in the idiosyncrasy of those two exceptional

beings, and in the history of the extraordinary relation which bound them together for twenty years, even after the most intimate link between them had been broken."

Even when Patiomkin transferred his affection in turn to each of his five nieces, her own ladies in waiting, Catherine, intent no doubt on her own kindred pleasures, raised no objection. This episode is perhaps the most remarkable and most reprehensible in Patiomkin's abnormal career. The letters addressed to his sister's daughters, first to Barbe, and in turn to her four sisters, are couched in the unrestrained language of youthful passion. To Barbe he writes thus: "If I love you to infinity, if my soul has no other support, do you know what all that means? Can I believe you when you promise to love me for ever? I love you, O my soul, as I have never loved. . . . Varinka, my life, my beauty, my divinity, say that you love me, that will be enough to restore to me health and gaiety, peace and happiness. My soul, I am filled with you, all of you, my beauty! Farewell, I embrace you all over." And this heat of adoration is reflected in Varinka's (Varinka seems to have been a pet name for Barbe) replies. "My love, my life," she writes to her uncle, then ill in bed, "I am very anxious about you. In God's name, my life, write to me. I embrace you a million times."

A little later, when Patiomkin is well again, we find him unburdening himself thus, "Little mother, Varinka, my soul, my life, you have slept, little silly, and you remember nothing. In leaving you, I put you to bed, and I kissed you many times over. I covered you with your dressing-gown and



PRINCE PATIOMKIN.  
*(From a mezzotint by James Walker.)*



a rug and I marked you with the sign of the Cross."

When Patiomkin was penning these too tender lines, the old reprobate had in his pocket a letter from another of his many lady-loves, one of the great ladies of the Court, which opens thus: "How have you passed the night, my dear? Better than me, I hope. I could not so much as close my eyes, I assure you. I do not know how my thought of you is the only one that absorbs me"; and closes: "you are so good to me; you seem to love me with all your heart. Good-bye; I leave you; I am expecting my husband."

When Patiomkin grew weary of his nieces, it was Prascovia Zakrievska, a cousin by marriage, who next inflamed his heart, and to her he pours forth the ever-ready lava of his love. "Come, O my mistress," he appeals to her. "Hasten, O my friend, my priceless treasure, incomparable gift of the Deity. I exist only in you, and I will spend my whole life in proving to you for ever and ever my boundless love. I kiss with all my heart your pretty little hands and your pretty little feet. . . . Dear darling, do not think that it is your beauty alone which enchants me, and that my love is lit by vulgar heats alone. In looking into your soul I have found an angel, an angel made after the likeness of my own soul; so you and I are one, and never can be parted."

And so it was to the end with this pampered slave of his passions, satyrlike in the pursuit of fresh victims, and transferring his affections from one to another with a rapidity which made Catherine herself, in comparison, seem a model of constancy.

Was he happy, this “spoilt child of the gods,” as he called himself, who drained to their dregs the cups of pleasure and power? “All my wishes, all my desires,” he once said, “have been carried out as if by magic. I wanted to have the charge of great affairs—I have it; orders—I have them all; I am fond of gambling—I can afford to lose incalculable sums; I like to give *fêtes*—I have given superb ones; I like to buy lands—I have as many as I want; I like to build houses—I have built palaces; I like precious stones—no private person has finer and rarer ones. In a word, I am overwhelmed with favours.” As he utters these last words, he seizes a porcelain plate, and dashes it to the ground; then he rushes into his bedroom and fastens the door behind him.

Even Catherine herself, Empress though she was, could not emulate the splendours of her chief subject. His palaces were filled with the costliest treasures of painting, sculpture and furnishings brought from all parts of the earth; while his jewels were unrivalled throughout the world. His favourite pastime was to pile these countless gems in glittering heaps on a table and arrange them in fantastic designs; or he would pour them in flaming many-coloured cataracts from one hand to the other, laughing with childish delight over his glittering toys. One day he grew suddenly weary of his jewels and sold them; only to purchase them back a few days later at double the price he had received for them. So great were his riches that even he had no idea of their amount. One enormous room in one of his palaces was lined with thousands of dummy volumes, each of which had its hollow



interior stuffed with rouleaux of imperials and ducats, representing a large fortune.

Probably the crowning triumph of Patiomkin's life was his "stage management" of that remarkable journey of Catherine to the Crimea, in 1787, to see with her own eyes the star which her former favourite had added to her Imperial crown. Never in history was a progress more regally splendid; never was a sovereign lady so successfully befooled.

Part of the long journey of 2000 kilomètres the Empress made in an enormous and sumptuous sleigh drawn by thirty horses; and part with an escort of eighty ships and 3000 soldiers. At every stopping-place she found a regally equipped house ready for her reception; and everywhere along her route her eyes were feasted with the sight of picturesque villages, peopled by a happy and prosperous peasantry, vast stretches of prairie-land dotted with sheep and goats, dancing maidens and piping shepherds—all arranged by the magic-working hand of Patiomkin to convert the wilderness into a land of promise and plenty for the delight of his unsuspecting mistress. As her galley proudly floated past the banks of the Dnieper on its way to the Black Sea, heralding a stately escort of eighty vessels, each with its band of melody-makers, "there appeared," says Segur, "on the banks of the river curious and admiring crowds to gaze at the splendid retinue and to present to their Sovereign the products of their various climes.

"On the plains Cossacks manœuvred, while here and there stood triumphal arches; and garlands and architectural decorations beautified villages, houses and cottages until they were transformed into

superb cities and palaces." Wherever the fleet came to an anchorage there was the same evidence of abounding prosperity, crowds of happy, cheering peasants, flocks and herds, smiling villages, dancing and song. To Catherine the journey was one long delight and surprise ; and if she suspected the hand of Patiomkin in it at all, she never revealed the least trace of her suspicion.

The Prince himself travelled in a style even more splendid than that of the Empress, for, we are told, "his suite included six hundred servants, a *corps de ballet*, two hundred musicians, a crowd of sycophants and a seraglio of ladies, chiefly composed of the wives of his marshals and colonels." On his return from this expedition he was received with a pomp and splendour such as no European sovereign could equal. Catherine presented him with 100,000 roubles, a uniform blazing with diamonds, and a palace furnished at a cost of 600,000 roubles—presents, regal as they were, which were but paltry to this spoilt child of fortune. It is said that on this journey Patiomkin lavished 7,000,000 roubles. Even if this were so, it represented but a small return of the 100,000,000 he is credited with having received from the bounty of Catherine.

Patiomkin's star, which had blazed so brilliantly for twenty years in the firmament of Russia and of Europe, was now soon destined to eclipse, although to all appearance it promised to shine with equal splendour for many a long year to come. In such abounding vigour seemed this *roué* of fifty-two in the spring of 1791 that Catherine writes to the Prince de Ligne, "To see Prince Marshal Patiomkin one would say that victories and successes

absolutely beautified him. He has returned from the army as handsome as day" (to Catherine he was always handsome, with, it may be, *la beauté du diable*), "as gay as a lark, as brilliant as a star, wittier than ever, not biting his nails any more, giving *fêtes*, every one more gorgeous than the last."

It was at one of these *fêtes*, more prodigally splendid than any he had ever given before, that Catherine saw her *protégé* for the last time. Never was queen more regally *fêted* than she by her ex-lover, on this last occasion of their meeting, in the magnificent Tauric Palace, the latest of her many presents to him. "All the splendours which the Prince has at his command, all the enchantments which he has ever wielded, are brought together and surpassed. It is no longer as a sovereign, it is as a goddess that Catherine is welcomed to the palace of the Taurida."

Patiomkin received his Imperial mistress in all the splendours of scarlet and gold and the blaze of precious stones. Three hundred musicians discoursed sweet music; in the masquerade ballet all the greatest men and fairest women in Russia moved and glittered, in a kaleidoscope of gorgeous costumes; a brilliant theatrical display followed, concluded with a wonderful Asiatic procession. The supper-tables groaned under their burden of gold and silver plate, the rarest wines flowed like water, and everywhere were evidences of wealth such as scarcely a royal palace in Europe could rival. It was Patiomkin's last triumph—the splendid climax of his dazzling career.

Never had Catherine exhibited such emotion as

this noble evidence of her favourite's loyalty excited in her. She lingered to the last, loth to leave the fairyland the Prince had created for her delight. When at last she rose to depart, the swelling music of a hymn specially composed in her honour broke down the last barriers of restraint, and, as she turned to bid her host "good-bye," the tears poured down her cheeks. Nor was Patiomkin less affected. "Overpowered by the strong feeling of what he owed to Her Majesty, he fell on his knee and seizing her hand, bedewed it with tears." Such were the pathetic circumstances under which these two people, whose lives had been so intimately linked, unconsciously said their last farewell to each other.

A few days later Patiomkin set out on a visit to the Southern Provinces—and to his death, which came with tragic suddenness. At Jassy he was seized by the illness which, though he little dreamt it, was so soon to prove fatal. In spite of his doctor's warnings and entreaties he persisted in keeping his windows wide open—it was in the depth of winter. "He poured eau-de-Cologne over his head in quantities, and breakfasted on Hamburg ham, raw turnips, salted goose and hung beef, washed down by enormous quantities of wines and liqueurs."

"I saw him during the attack of fever," records Langeron, "devour a ham, a salted goose and three or four fowls, and drink *kvass*, *klukeva*, hydromel, and all kinds of wines." So impatient was he to continue his journey that, although his life was hanging in the balance, he insisted on leaving Jassy and travelling to Nikolaief; but he had not covered

many leagues before a violent fit of choking seized him. He was lifted out of the carriage; laid on the grass; and, a few minutes later, gasped out his life, his head pillowed on the lap of his niece, Princess Branitsky. Thus perished by the roadside in the darkness of an October morning, in 1791, the Prince who for a score of years had been one of the most powerful and dazzling figures in Europe, the virtual ruler of a mighty empire.

When the news of his death reached Catherine "she lost consciousness, the blood ran to her head and she was obliged to be bled," writes Genet, the French *chargé d'affaires*. She was inconsolable and spent days and nights in solitary weeping, refusing to see anyone. In her grief she wrote to Grimm: "A rude and terrible blow struck me yesterday. My pupil, my friend, my almost idol Prince Patiomkin, of the Taurida, is dead . . . oh, heavens! it is now that I need to be *Madame la Ressource*! Again I shall have to raise up people for my service."

Three months after his body had been laid in the Church of St Catherine at Kherson, Count Rastoptshin wrote of him: "He is already entirely forgotten. The generations to come will not bless his memory. He possessed in the highest degree the art of doing evil with good, and of rousing hatred in those on whom he was heaping careless favours. . . . His last weakness was to fall in love with every woman he saw and pass for *mauvais sujet*. This desire, foolish as it was, had an immense success. The women ran after the favour of the Prince as the men ran after him for the posts at his disposal."

A few years later, at the bidding of the Emperor Paul, son of the Empress whose "idol" he had so long been, the mausoleum which was his last stately resting-place was destroyed, and the ashes it covered were scattered to the winds.

## A MADCAP MAID OF HONOUR

“NATURE had embellished her with inexpressible charms, to which the graces had put the finishing touches ; her figure was radiant as that of Aurora or of the Goddess of Spring.” Such was the poetic description by Count Hamilton of the physical charms of Frances Jennings, who played such a romantic part on the world’s stage in the days of the “Merrie Monarch,” and whose end was as obscure as her zenith had been dazzling.

When Frances Jennings first opened her eyes on the world at Sandridge, near St Albans, one day in the year 1648, she seemed as far removed from the splendour of courts and the idolatry of princes as from the heavens. Her father was Richard Jennings, a plain country gentleman of bucolic tastes, who expected nothing from his daughters more than that they should mate with country squires like himself and spend their days in rearing healthy children and playing the *rôle* of good housewives ; little dreaming, or probably caring, that they would one day wear ducal coronets and move in the circle of the throne itself.

But there was that in the blood of these rustic maidens which raised their ambition far higher than their cradle. Although, among their Jennings ancestors, there had been none more distinguished than their grandfather, Sir John, whom the first Charles had dubbed a knight and who had served

as High Sheriff of his native Hertfordshire, on the distaff side they came from a long line of fair and gently-born women whose beauty had for generations been a tradition and a toast ; and this beauty, a richer dower than wealth or rank, they inherited in liberal measure.

Even as children, their loveliness and winsomeness were the talk of all the countryside ; and as the bud opened into the flower of girlhood, every year added some new touch of beauty and fragrance to their charms, until their fame travelled over England and to the Court itself. It was thus little wonder, when the Duchess of York determined to surround herself with maids of honour who should be the most beautiful in any court of Europe, that Frances Jennings, the fairer of the two lovely sisters, should be summoned to Court and should be chosen as one of the new galaxy of beauty. Thus it was that, as a girl of sixteen, Frances found herself transported from the rustic environment in which her loveliness had hitherto been set, to the splendours and temptations of Whitehall. It was a dazzling transformation for one so quietly and obscurely brought up ; for, at her coming, she was hailed as a new and wonderful revelation of female beauty. She became, by a bound, the sensation of the town, the toast of every lordly gallant, and the idol of the populace, who followed her in admiring crowds whenever she appeared in the parks or streets ; and, more than this, at the first sight of her, the Duke of York and his brother, the King, proclaimed themselves her slaves.

The Duke, in particular, lost his heart hopelessly to his wife's new maid of honour, and persecuted



her with his unwelcome, if flattering, attentions, which Frances, who was in no mood to become the light-o'-love of any man, even a royal prince, treated with a tantalising indifference. When "ogling speeches and embassies" failed to win her smiles he made his pen the vehicle of his passion. "Every day," we are told, "notes containing the tenderest expressions and most magnificent promises, were slipped into her pockets or muff. This, however, could not be done unperceived, and the malicious little creature took care that those who saw them slip in should likewise see them fall out unopened. She had only to shake her muff or pull out her handkerchief as soon as his back was turned, and his notes rained about her for anyone to pick up who chose.

"The Duchess was frequently a witness of this conduct, but could not find it in her heart to chide her maid of honour for want of respect to the Duke. Thus the charm and virtue of Miss Jennings were the only subjects of conversation in the two Courts; people could not understand how a young creature fresh from the country should so soon become the ornament of the Court by her attractions, and its example by her conduct."

This invincible modesty was, however, part of Frances Jennings' programme. She was no Lady Shrewsbury to stake virtue in the gamble of ambition, even when the heir to the throne was so passionately eager to pay any price for it. With her beauty she meant to win both rank and riches; but none, she vowed, should ever possess it who could not call her "wife." And when the royal James at last realised how unattainable was the

prize he coveted, he found a more willing solace in Arabella, the fair sister of John Churchill, the future Duke of Marlborough. But this escape by no means ended Frances' danger; for where his brother failed, King Charles himself determined to succeed. What might have been the consequences of this wooing of the country maid by one of the most charming, witty and adroit lovers in England, and that lover the Sovereign of the Realm, it is impossible even to speculate; but fortunately for Frances the royal wooing was cut short by Miss Stuart, the lovely Scotswoman who held the first place in the King's affection, and who would have none of it.

Thus secure at last from royal persecution the Court beauty was left free to play her own little game of conquest, and to pick and choose among her noble lovers, whose name, as may be imagined, was "legion." The youthful Marquis de Berny, son of one of Louis XV.'s chief ministers, was for a time first in her rather fickle favour. "Your son's declaration," wrote the French Ambassador to the youth's father, "has been well received by one of the finest girls in England—Miss Jennings of the household of the Duke of York. She is small, but with a fine figure, a splendid complexion, the hair such as you remember Madame de Longueville's was, brilliant, keen eyes, and the whitest, smoothest skin I ever saw." But the Marquis's dream of happiness was cut ruthlessly short; for his father, who had other and higher designs for his son's matrimonial future, promptly ordered him to come home, and thus ignominiously ended the maid of honour's first love affair.

But whatever regrets Frances may have had for her little romance thus rudely destroyed in the bud, they were soon dissipated by the arrival on the scene of a much more attractive lover—none other than the gay, gallant, dashing Dick Talbot, the handsomest man in all his native Ireland, and out of it, the hero of a thousand adventures and a hundred brushes with death. Never had Nature modelled a man more calculated to take a maiden's heart by storm than this young Irishman, for in addition to his handsome face and his magnificent figure, "which was the model for statuaries," and the halo of romance with which his adventurous life surrounded him, he had a rare wit, and a singular fascination of manner, and ardour of passion.

To such a combination of assaults the citadel of Frances' heart could not long offer resistance; and it was soon announced that the Admirable Crichton was betrothed to "the prettiest girl in England," with the approval of the Duchess of York. But Talbot, as *fiancé*, proved too exacting an autocrat to please the wayward fancy of the maid of honour, and almost before he could realise his good fortune he was told to go elsewhere to seek a lady more submissive.

Frances had not long to languish for an eligible successor; for she soon had Henry Jermyn, the most famous beau in England, and the owner, to boot, of £20,000 a year, at her dainty feet; and there is little doubt that Jermyn would have secured the coveted prize had not one of his lady-love's many escapades given him an excuse to change his mind.

Of all the merry maids at the Royal Court

there was no greater madcap than pretty Frances Jennings, of whose pranks some most entertaining stories are told. Of one of them Pepys tells the following story. "Miss Jennings the other day dressed herself like an orange wench, and went up and down and cried 'Oranges!' till, falling down, or by some accident, her fine shoes were discovered." But this was a mild frolic compared with that other which gave Henry Jermyn pause in his matrimonial design, and of which the story, as told by Count Hamilton, runs thus.

The dissolute Earl of Rochester, after his banishment from Court by Charles II., had returned to town and, under the guise of a German doctor, skilled in medicine and soothsaying, had taken up his abode near the Tower; and, in a mood of mischievousness, Miss Jennings decided to pay a visit to the necromancer to have her fortune told, with Miss Price, a kindred spirit, for companion.

"Having well considered the matter the best disguise they could think of was (as on a former occasion) to dress themselves like the girls who sell oranges in the theatres and public promenades. This was soon managed; they attired themselves alike, each taking a basket of oranges, and having embarked in a hackney coach, they committed themselves to fortune without any other escort than their own caprice and indiscretion. As the coach rattled past the Duke's Theatre, where the Queen and the Duchess of York were seated in state, the impish idea occurred to the madcaps of entering the theatre and hawking their oranges under the very noses of the royal ladies, to whom they were so well known."

No sooner said than done ; but alas ! their courage was not equal to their enterprise. No sooner had they set foot in the lobby, with their baskets in their arms, than Killigrew, a famous dandy of the time, accosted them and, with the boldness of his class, chucked Miss Jennings under the chin and put his arm round her waist, alarming her to such an extent that, wrenching herself free, she bolted back to the coach, followed by her companion. A still more daring adventure awaited them as their coach drew near to their destination, the German doctor's house ; for, as the girls dismounted, leaving their orange baskets behind them, they found themselves face to face with a very familiar figure, that of Brounker, the biggest *roué* in town. At sight of him their hearts sank into their boots, for they saw at a glance that he recognised them. " The old fox, however, possessed wonderful self-command, and having teased them to remove suspicion, quitted them, telling Price that she was a great fool to refuse his offers to accompany him, and that she would not, perhaps, get so much in a year as she might with him in a day ; that the times were greatly changed since the Queen's and the Duchess's maids of honour nowadays came to the same market as the poor women of the town ! "

This second misadventure took away the little heart that was still left in them, and returning to their coach, where they found their coachman trying to protect their oranges from a gang of roughs, they drove back to the palace as fast as the horses could go—cured, for the time at least, of their love of adventure. Within a few days the

story of their escapade was all over the town, thanks to the treacherous Brounker, and Jermyn decided that such a madcap as Frances Jennings was too great a responsibility for him. He preferred to risk his life in battle; and he rode away to join the expedition to New Guinea, with the taunts of his deserted lady-love in his ears.

But if Henry Jermyn was foolish enough to run away from the fun-loving maid of honour there was no lack of suitors to take his place; and to one of them, George Hamilton, the good-looking and fascinating grandson of the first Earl of Abercorn, the wilful girl at last consented to give her hand, though it is said her heart went not with it. Why she thus chose a penniless younger son for her husband, or why she married Hamilton at all, since he had made no impression on her heart, is a mystery which probably she herself could not solve. Thus at seventeen we find her as a bride accompanying her husband, whom Charles had knighted probably for her sake more than for his, to France, where he offered his sword to Louis XIV. A few years of fighting, and Count Hamilton, as he had by that time become, fell on a Flanders battlefield, leaving his widow, a more lovely woman than ever, to face the world with her three young children on a paltry pension awarded to her by the French Government.

It was not likely, however, that a woman so dowered with beauty and so fired by an unsatisfied ambition would long languish in obscurity. There were worlds still left to conquer. As a child she had vowed she would "die a Duchess," and it was not by any means too late to reach that exalted

goal. By the time she had laid aside her widow's weeds we find her in the suite of the lady of the English Ambassador to France—"a sprightly young lady," as Evelyn describes her, "much in the good graces of the family." And it was while travelling thus that she met once again Talbot whom, fifteen years earlier, she had dismissed so cavalierly.

Though the handsome Irishman had married and buried a wife in the meantime he still had a very tender place in his heart for the "adorable Jennings," and once more put his fate to the test with happier results; for this time Frances not only said "yes" to his question but stuck to it. Royalty smiled on the match; the Duke of York installed Talbot as a groom of the bedchamber; his Duchess took the bride under her wing; and all went merrily as wedding bells.

From the world's point of view the match no doubt seemed to promise little in the way of advancement, and Colonel Talbot's wife must have thought her chances of a ducal coronet more remote than ever; but, though she little knew it, it was coming to her. She was to "die a Duchess" after all. The first important step in this direction was when James II., on his accession, created Talbot Earl of Tyrconnel and put him in command of the troops in Ireland, whither his Countess accompanied him; and the goal was reached a few years later, when her husband the Earl blossomed into the Duke of Tyrconnel and Viceroy of Ireland.

Frances Jennings had now reached the dazzling pinnacle of her ambition—and more, for she was not only a duchess, but a vice-queen. And

seldom, if ever, has Ireland had a queen more beautiful, more regal or more splendid. Through all the troublous times of faction and jealousy that followed she steered the barque of her fortunes with consummate cleverness, and maintained the supremacy of her husband and herself in the face of difficulties which would speedily have overwhelmed a weaker nature. Even on that evil day of the Battle of the Boyne, when she saw the sun of her splendour setting for ever, she never for a moment lost her dignified composure.

“When,” as Mr Trowbridge says, “the fleeing King arrived at Dublin Castle, faint and covered with mud so as to be hardly recognised, the Duchess of Tyrconnel assembled her household in state, and dressing herself magnificently, received him with all the splendour of Court etiquette. Never has the Castle witnessed a function more dramatic than this of Dick Talbot’s Vicereine on the night of the Battle of the Boyne. Having on one knee congratulated James on his safety she invited him to partake of refreshment.” His answer is celebrated. Shaking his head sadly, he replied that his breakfast that morning had spoiled his appetite, and he ironically complimented her on the swiftness of her husband’s countrymen’s heels. “At least your Majesty has the advantage of them,” she could not help retorting, stung by the ruin of her hopes and ambitions.

The days of her queendom were over; and when James returned to France she followed him into his exile, in order to protect at the treacherous Court of St Germain the brave husband whose side she so reluctantly left for his sake. One satisfac-



tion she had to console her a little for the loss of her high position—she had secured husbands for her daughters in three Irish viscounts,—Rosse, Dillon, and Kingsland—and had thus provided for their future whatever might befall her.

But worse than the loss of place and power was to follow soon. Her husband, who in the following year had returned to Ireland for another tussle with William of Orange, died with tragic suddenness. “On the eleventh of August,” says Macaulay, “he [Tyrconnel] dined with d’Usson. The party was gay. The Lord Lieutenant seemed to have thrown off the load which had bowed down his body and mind. He drank; he jested; he was again the Dick Talbot who had dined and revelled with Grammont. Soon after he had risen from table an apoplectic stroke deprived him of speech and sensation. On the fourteenth he had breathed his last. The wasted remains of that form which had once been the model for statuaries were laid under the pavement of the cathedral [of Limerick] but no inscription, no tradition, preserves the memory of the spot.”

The Duchess had now fallen on very evil days. She had lost her proud position and her gallant and devoted husband; she was an exile among strangers, the pitiful hanger-on of a discredited Court; her children, with whom she was not on good terms, were far away; and she was so poor that, it is said, she often lacked the simplest food. Even when James allowed her a small pension her lot was little improved. Her sun had indeed set—and it was never to rise again.

Through all her dark hours of eclipse and mis-

fortune, however, she carried the same brave heart with which she faced the crushing climax to her rule as Vice-Queen of Ireland. How she lived during these years is not certainly known. It is said that for a time she acted as secret agent to her brother-in-law, the Duke of Marlborough, and that, when this source of income failed, she actually, for a time, kept a stall in the Royal Exchange.

Horace Walpole, who is our authority for this, says, "Above stairs sat, in the character of a milliner, the reduced Duchess of Tyrconnel, wife of Richard Talbot, Lord Deputy of Ireland under James II. This female, suspected to be his Duchess after her death, supported herself for a few days, till she was known and otherwise provided for, by the little trade of the place. She had delicacy enough to wish not to be detected; she sat in a white mask and a white dress, and was known by the name of the 'White Milliner.' Probably none of the fine ladies who purchased trifles at her stall had any suspicion that the mysterious saleswoman had been in other days the most courted beauty in England—vainly wooed by two Kings—and Deputy Queen of Ireland."

Of her later life little remains to be told. From the degradation of the milliner's stall she seems to have been rescued by her brother-in-law, the Duke of Marlborough, whose influence secured the restoration of a small portion of her husband's Irish property; and, thus secure from want, she spent the last thirty years of her long life in Dublin, the scene of her greatest triumphs. Her beauty had long taken wings. "Very small and frail," Walpole describes her at this time, "but still sharp of tongue

and keen of eye; without the least trace of her once brilliant beauty." And her death, which Walpole thus records, was the tragic climax to these long years of loneliness and sadness: "Her death was occasioned by falling out of her bed on the floor in a winter's night, and, being too feeble to rise or call out, she was found in the morning so perished with cold that she died in a few hours." Thus, in the darkness, untended and alone, died Frances Jennings, who, during her eighty-two years, had tasted some of the most intoxicating delights and drained some of the bitterest dregs that the cup of life has ever presented to human lips.

## A SEMI-ROYAL ADVENTURESS

ONE day in the year 1766 the splendid coach of the Marquis de Boulainvilliers, drawn by its four straining horses, was slowly climbing a hill between Paris and the suburban village of Passy when an odd little figure, barefooted and in rags and carrying on its back a younger child, emerged from the roadside and pitifully pleaded for alms.

“Please, kind lady and gentleman,” she panted, as she tried to keep pace with the coach, “spare a coin for two little orphans descended from Henri II., King of France.” The Marquis frowned on the little figure with the small, plaintive voice, and gruffly bade her begone with her preposterous nonsense; but the child was quick to see the look of kindness and sympathy in the eyes of the beautiful lady by his side and limped painfully on, repeating her strange appeal. “Where do you live, little one?” asked the Marquise; and when the child had told her she continued, “Well, run away now, and I will see what I can do for you.”

On the following day, after careful inquiries as to what was known of these strange children who claimed such a lofty descent, the Marquise sent for them to her château, and, touched by their pitiful condition, decided to adopt them, and to provide for their future and for that of their little brother Jacques.

Were they impostors or was there any truth in

the grotesque claim that these children of the gutter, begging alms by the roadside, had the royal blood of Valois in their veins, was a question to which the tender-hearted Marquise was unable to find an answer. It was sufficient for her that they were destitute and friendless, and it was not until years later that she learned the singular story of their past, which was surely one of the most romantic in the history of human vicissitudes.

A couple of centuries earlier Henri II. of Valois, King of France, and husband of Catherine de Medicis, became father by one of his many mistresses of a son whom he created Baron de Valois and enriched with large estates in the district of Bar-sur-Aube; and whose descendants flourished for a time among the proudest nobles of France. But extravagance and improvidence was in the blood of the Valois barons; their possessions were squandered in riotous living; and, a few years before this story opens, the head of this semi-royal house had sunk to the rank of a peasant. The last of his thousands of acres had gone from his hands; the once proud château was a roofless ruin; and his social debacle was complete when he took to wife the slatternly daughter of a local game-keeper. A slave to drink and addicted to the lowest of society and pursuits, this descendant of kings was barely able to keep a mean hovel over the heads of his wife and children, by the fruits of his poaching and stealing.

But from the sordid wreckage of his fortune the drunken poacher had rescued his patents of nobility and the papers which vouched for his illustrious descent, and these he clung to tenaciously. He

kept them for safety under his filthy mattress, and in his drunken moods would produce them and weep maudlin tears over these evidences of a past grandeur. The proud edifice of his family fortunes lay in hopeless ruin, but none could take from him his royal origin and the records of glories that were gone.

To his low-born wife these faded parchments meant nothing except—and the thought flashed into her mind as an inspiration—as a means of appealing to the rich and powerful for a little help in their extremity. Why not take them to Paris and make capital of them? There at least the descendant of Henri de Valois would not be allowed to starve or be driven to stealing to keep hunger from his door. And thus it was that one day the noble poacher, his wife and two of their three young children turned their backs on the scene of the family glory and shame and set out to tramp to distant Paris. The third child, Marianne, who was still too young to walk, they left on the doorstep of a local grocer to make her mute appeal to his charity.

Arrived at the capital their dreams of a brighter future were soon dissipated. No one would believe their story; they were spurned from every door; and as a last resource were driven to beg for their bread in the streets, the two children—the elder of whom was barely five—being taught to solicit alms as the descendants of Henry of Valois, King of France, and being soundly thrashed when they returned empty-handed.

They had not been long in Paris when their father, the Baron, worn out with years of dissipation

and enfeebled by hardship and hunger, died in the Hôtel de Dieu—a loss for which the Baroness soon consoled herself by marrying a tramp, one Raymond, who, in his more prosperous days, had been a soldier. And when, a little later, her new husband found Paris too hot to hold him, she accompanied him in his exile, leaving her children to the mercy of the world, with results which we have seen in the opening of this story.

It was a fortunate day for the little ones when they came under the kindly eyes of the Marquise de Boulainvilliers; their days of begging and starvation were over, and as the *protégées* of their wealthy and high-placed benefactress they found themselves in a new world of opulence and luxury. But the Marquise did not intend her charges to lead idle lives. They were sent to a neighbouring school, and when Jeanne was fourteen she was apprenticed to a dressmaker, very much against the young lady's inclination. She rebelled against the hardships of her new life, and especially against the ignominy of having to do servants' work, such as cooking, washing and ironing—all useful training, no doubt, but a gross indignity to one who had in her veins the blood of kings. Her tears and appeals at last persuaded the Marquise to release her from her servitude and to take her back to the château as companion, a *rôle* much more to her taste than that of scrubbing floors.

To her benefactress Jeanne was never weary of repeating the story of her high descent or of begging her to have it investigated, with the result that the Marquise placed the matter in the hands of a famous genealogist, who was able to satisfy

her that the claim was genuine—that the ex-beggar child was in fact a lineal descendant of Henri II. de Valois, King of France. A few weeks later the Marquise took her *protégées* to Paris; and their story was told to Louis XV. himself, who gave his permission to Jeanne to style herself “Mademoiselle de Valois,” confirmed Jacques in his title of Baron de Valois and gave him a naval commission, and sanctioned an allowance to each member of the family of 800 livres a year.

The pride the sisters must have felt at this exalted recognition of their royal descent was qualified by the King’s expressed desire that they should retire from the world to a convent, possibly in the hope that in this way the House of Valois would end with them; and to the Abbey of Yères Jeanne and Marianne accordingly were sent. And not a day too soon, for the Marquis had begun to cast amorous eyes on the elder of his wife’s *protégées*, who seems to have been far from resenting his overtures. Even in the shelter of the convent he prosecuted his suit, to such an extent that it became necessary for its credit to send the sisters packing.

At the Abbey of Longchamps the experience was repeated. The Marquis was much too frequent a visitor to please the Abbess; and Jeanne and Marianne would certainly have been expelled had not the Marquis got into serious trouble for cheating the revenue by installing a secret still in his Paris house, and to evade the consequences been compelled to make himself scarce for a time. But the young ladies of the House of Valois were much too flighty and restless to remain long in



cloistered seclusion. Their rank had been recognised, but the broad ancestral acres were still withheld from them, and they decided to make a pilgrimage to Bar-sur-Aube to "claim their rights." Here, in the country of their ancestors, they were received with the respect due to fallen princesses, and received a most hospitable welcome to the house of a wealthy lady, Madame de Suremont, who counted herself highly honoured in playing the hostess to such romantic and distinguished guests. They were *fêted* and made much of by the local society, and every officer in the neighbouring barracks at Luneville promptly lost his heart to one or the other of them. Of Mademoiselle de Valois, one who knew her at this time gives the following description:—"If not exactly handsome, she had a graceful figure, blue eyes full of expression, and well-arched black eyebrows. Although her face was a trifle too long and her mouth too wide, she had beautiful teeth and a very fascinating smile. She had pretty hands and tiny feet, and her complexion was brilliantly fair. She was clever and quick-witted, but she was entirely without the moral sense"—a defect which was perhaps her chief characteristic through life, and which was responsible for her later remarkable career.

Among her many gallant wooers was the youthful Baron de Lamotte, a man as deficient in intellect as in morals, but who made an imposing appearance in his uniform of scarlet and silver; and to this shady young nobleman Mademoiselle de Valois surrendered her hand—only, let it be said, after she had more than exhausted the

hospitality of Madame Suremont, whose husband was among her most ardent and intimate admirers. A month after the wedding-bells rang their merry peals on her nuptial day, Baroness de Lamotte became the mother of two fine boys, whose paternity was credited impartially to M. de Suremont, the Bishop of Langres, and her husband.

As the wife of the Baron, Jeanne found herself in even worse condition than as a spinster. In addition to his army pay her husband had but a paltry allowance of a pound a month, and the young couple soon found themselves hopelessly involved in debt, for the Baroness was as extravagant as she was poor. A change of scene soon became advisable, and what more natural than that she should once more seek out her old benefactress, the Marquise, and appeal again to her generosity? She discovered Madame de Boulainvilliers in the palace of Saverne, where she was the guest of Prince Louis de Rohan, Cardinal Archbishop; and she exercised her arts so well that, while the Marquise paid her debts, the Cardinal, who ever had a weakness for a pretty and fascinating woman, took her under his august protection.

Prince Louis de Rohan, a cadet of one of the noblest houses of France, whose family influence had secured for him a Cardinal's hat and the Court appointment of Grand Almoner of Louis XVI., was an instrument, as she thought, especially designed by Providence to aid her in her ambitious projects. She quickly discovered that he was shallow and inordinately vain; and none knew better than she how to turn these weaknesses to her own advantage. But while she adroitly paved

the way for this brilliant design she lost no time in trying to curry favour with the great ladies of the Court. To them she professed to be an intimate friend of Queen Marie Antoinette and showed them letters—ostensibly in her Majesty's handwriting, but actually forged by a friend of her husband—addressing her as “my sweetheart,” “my dearest Comtesse” (a title she had assumed for her purpose). But to all her advances even the King's mistresses turned a cold and contemptuous shoulder. It was quite clear that she must try some other way to gain Louis' ear and favour—and what better way could there be than through the vain and gullible Cardinal, who was already a slave to her charms?

The Baroness was quick to discover the most vulnerable point—one of many—in the Cardinal's armour. Some years earlier, while in Vienna, he had incurred the serious displeasure of Marie Theresa, the Empress, by the flagrant immorality of his life. With abundant wealth, exalted rank and a handsome person he was in a position to indulge to the fullest extent his dissolute tastes; and he never allowed his sacred office, as a Prince of the Church, to interfere with his pleasures. Such conduct naturally shocked the Empress, who not only took a violent dislike to de Rohan, but took good care to infect her daughter Marie Antoinette with her detestation. The result was that the Cardinal was forbidden to appear at the French Court.

For years he had chafed in vain against this humiliation; to all his approaches Louis and his beautiful consort turned a deaf ear. If he could

only secure an audience with Marie Antoinette he was vain enough to think that his supple tongue, courtly manners and handsome face would quickly conquer her dislike and install him in her favour. But this was precisely what he could not do. Marie Antoinette point-blank refused even to see him.

This then was Madame de Lamotte's opportunity. Undismayed by her rebuffs at Court, she determined to practise the same arts on the Cardinal. She assured him that she was a very dear friend of the Queen ; and, to remove any doubts he might have, showed him her Majesty's letters couched in the language of affection and intimacy. Her Majesty, she declared, was so devoted to her that she could refuse nothing she asked ; and it would be the easiest matter in the world to induce her to take him into favour again. At any rate she would do her best and would never rest until her dear Cardinal was a welcome figure at the Court, which no one was so well equipped to adorn.

Rohan was delighted. His cup of happiness would be full when the Queen deigned to smile on him once more ; and—who knows?—he, who was a past master in the arts of gallantry, might even hope to touch the heart of his Sovereign lady.

It was not long before Madame was able to assure the Prince that the Queen's prejudices were all melting under the ardour of her championship ; and to place in his hands a letter full of friendly assurances, which she said had been entrusted to her to give to him. There could be no possible mistake about it ; the billet was in her Majesty's own handwriting and signed "Your friend, Marie

Antoinette"; and as the foolish man read the words he pressed the sheet to his lips and showered kisses on it. Other letters followed, each more cordial than its predecessor. Rohan was transported to the seventh heaven. The great lady who had so coldly avoided him was now his friend—nay, more, the sentiments she expressed were warmer than mere friendship dictated. One thing only was necessary now to make his bliss complete—an interview with the Sovereign lady, the pressure of her hand; and these his ally confidently promised him at an early date.

To promise the interview was more easy than to arrange it; but even this difficulty was overcome by Madame's usual good luck. One day her husband chanced to see a girl who bore an extraordinary likeness, in face and figure, to the Queen, and, introducing himself to her, he persuaded her to accompany him to his wife, who naturally hailed the new and innocent recruit with delight. After informing the girl (who proved to be Mademoiselle Leguay, a poor chorus-singer) that she was an intimate friend of Marie Antoinette, Madame proceeded to inform her that the Queen had commissioned her to find a young lady who would do her a service, for which her Majesty was prepared to pay a sum of 15,000 francs. Overwhelmed by the honour and the promised reward, Mademoiselle Leguay gladly consented, and received the necessary instructions for the romantic part she was to play.

A few days later Madame de Lamotte was able to assure the Cardinal that the Queen had condescended to give him an interview—a secret meeting after dark—in the garden of the Château

of Versailles. At last the Cardinal's cup of bliss was full ; he counted the hours, the minutes, that separated him from the crown of his triumph ; and as, at the time appointed, he paced up and down outside the garden wall at the trysting place, his excitement knew no bounds. After what seemed hours of waiting, he saw the Comtesse approaching. "Quick," was her hurried, whispered greeting ; "the Queen is here" ; and glancing round he saw a white figure coming towards him in the dark shadow of the wall. A moment later he had fallen on one knee, a tall and gracious figure was stooping over him, and a rose was placed in his hand with the softly spoken words, "You know what this means." Before he could recover his scattered senses, the figure had vanished as swiftly and as mysteriously as it had come ; and he was alone, pressing feverish kisses on the grass on which the dainty feet had trod.

"That bewitching rose is in my heart," he wrote to Marie Antoinette, the same evening. "I shall keep it all my life ; and it will continually recall to me the first hour of my happiness." These were the enraptured words which the Comtesse, to whom the letter had been entrusted for delivery, was laughing over an hour later, as she saw the flames devour her dupe's letter. And at the same moment Mademoiselle Leguay, the pretty chorus-singer, who had been bribed to impersonate the Queen at this romantic tryst, was silently chuckling over the incident with some boon companions at a neighbouring restaurant.

The Cardinal had now no doubt that the Queen had at last succumbed to his charms. He had not

only secured her friendship: he had conquered her heart! And, elated with his triumph, he gladly handed over to the Comtesse sums of 50,000 and 100,000 francs, of which, she assured him, the Queen stood in need.

Elated with the success of this coup, Madame and her weak-kneed husband, who appears to have spent most of his time in low dissipation, and to have been content to leave the breadwinning to his brilliant wife, travelled to Bar-sur-Aube to flaunt their ill-gotten riches in the face of the people who had known her as a barefooted gamin, daughter of the most disreputable, if the best-born, man in the district. Here they purchased a country house, ostensibly until their château could be restored to its old-time splendour; they entertained regally and squandered their money with a prodigal hand, creating considerable sensation for a time. But even 150,000 francs could not long survive such extravagance, and it was with an empty purse that, a few months later, the precious couple made their way back to Paris in search of new adventures.

As luck would have it a victim was already awaiting them. For many years M. Böhmer, a Court jeweller, had tried in vain to find a purchaser for a diamond necklace, of exquisite beauty and great value, in which he had sunk most of his capital. He asked 1,600,000 francs for it; but, although he had hawked it to all the courts of Europe, nowhere could he find a buyer. Again and again M. Böhmer took his necklace to the Court, hoping to dazzle Marie Antoinette's eyes with the seductive bauble; but, fascinated as she was by its superlative loveliness, she declined to be tempted

by it. "The King, I know, would give it to me," she said, in answer to the jeweller's importunate pleading, "but I refuse it. Please do not mention it to me again."

M. Böhmer was in despair. He was unwilling to break up the necklace and sell it piecemeal; and no one would or could purchase it in its entire beauty. Meanwhile he was losing something like 70,000 francs a year in interest on the capital it represented. There was still, however, just one ray of hope left to him. He had heard of the Comtesse de Lamotte and her reputed intimacy with Marie Antoinette. If anyone could persuade the Queen to relent and purchase the necklace surely it was this very privileged friend. To the Comtesse accordingly he took his glittering treasure, as a last resource, and besought her to use her great influence to induce her Majesty to change her mind.

The Comtesse, however, proved to be even less accessible than her royal friend. She declined resolutely to have anything to do with M. Böhmer or his bauble, and, when he ventured to offer her a bribe of 1000 francs for her services, she turned on the unhappy man as if she would rend him in her righteous anger at such an affront. Three times the jeweller called; and the third time he was relieved to see signs of yielding. Pursuing his advantage, he ultimately won her consent, to his great delight, in this qualified form: "If I can be of any use to you I will do what I can, without any reward. But, whether I fail or succeed, on no account must my name be mentioned in the matter."



The Comtesse lost no time in sending a letter to Rohan, cleverly forged by her friend in Marie Antoinette's handwriting, begging him to return at once to Paris as she had need of his services in a delicate negotiation. "If you wish to be restored to my favour," the letter concluded, "you will not fail me!" There was little possibility of the Cardinal failing to obey such a mandate from the Sovereign lady who had already been so gracious to him. He returned post-haste, and learned from the lips of the Comtesse, the Queen's friend and intermediary, what her royal mistress wished him to do—which, of course, was to purchase the necklace on her behalf.

"The Queen," said the Comtesse impressively, "wishes the negotiation to be quite secret, for a time at least. She is so afraid the King may be offended. And as she has not at present the money to purchase the necklace outright, she wishes the Cardinal to guarantee the payment."

Rohan was delighted at this further and conclusive proof of the confidence her Majesty reposed in him. The necklace was purchased, on his guarantee, for 1,600,000 francs, to be paid in four half-yearly instalments; a receipt was given in the Queen's handwriting; and the necklace was handed to the Comtesse, who was to give it into Marie Antoinette's own hands. Needless, however, to state Madame had very different intentions. She promptly took the diamonds from their setting; and, a few days later, her husband had sold most of them to a Bond Street jeweller for a sum sufficient to keep him and his lady in luxury for the rest of their days.

Assured that at last he had fully earned the Queen's favour, the Cardinal presented himself at Court, only to find to his dismay that Marie Antoinette treated him as coldly and contemptuously as before the change in her secret attitude. But did he not know that her heart was his, and that this was but a superficial coldness, to blind the world to her true feelings? Another discomfiting fact was that, even on State occasions, she never wore the necklace he had procured for her—a fact which was also beginning to create much uneasiness in M. Böhmer's mind. So much so, that the jeweller, when sending a bill to her Majesty for some trifle she had bought, took the opportunity to remind her of the purchase of the necklace, concluding his letter thus: "We feel genuine satisfaction in the knowledge that the handsomest collection of diamonds in existence is in the possession of the most lovely of Queens." "The man must be mad," was the Queen's comment, as she read words which conveyed no meaning to her.

The day of reckoning and revelation was, however, at hand. When the first instalment of 400,000 francs fell due, the money was not forthcoming. A trivial sum was handed by Madame de Lamotte to the Cardinal to pay to the jeweller, with a request from the Queen to postpone payment of the large balance. Further, M. Böhmer's partner, M. Bassange, had discovered that the receipt for the necklace bore little similarity to her Majesty's handwriting. Suspicion gave place to consternation. M. Bassange hurried to the Comtesse to ask for an explanation, and received the cool assurance that the *whole transaction was a fraud*; that the Queen's signature

was forged, and that he must look to the Cardinal for payment!

When the disclosure of the fraud came to Marie Antoinette's ears she was furious beyond words, especially at the part played in it by the man whom she so detested and who had actually posed as her trusted agent. She insisted that the Cardinal and all implicated in the swindle should be arrested, and that her own innocence should be publicly established in a court of law. An hour later the Prince de Rohan, in the splendour of his episcopal robes, was conducted to the presence of the King and Queen to explain his singular conduct.

It is difficult to resist a feeling of pity for the Cardinal, crass as his folly had been, as he stood in the crowded palace hall, with bowed head, before his offended Sovereigns. The King's frown he could bear; but the cold, disdainful regard of the Queen, his infatuation for whom had brought him to this pitiful plight, cut him to the heart. "Who authorised you," demanded Louis sternly, "to buy this necklace for the Queen of France?" "A lady named Lamotte who brought me a letter from the Queen," was the crushed Cardinal's answer. "I thought that in executing her Majesty's commission I was doing her a service."

"You thought," interrupted the Queen, in a voice vibrating with anger, "*you* thought you were rendering *me* a service—me, who, since you first came to Court, have never addressed a word to or directed a glance at you!" When, at the King's demand, he produced the receipt for the necklace, Louis exclaimed, "Why, this no more resembles her Majesty's handwriting than my own; and

further, how could you, a Prince Cardinal, believe that the Queen would sign herself 'Marie Antoinette of *France*'? Go, sir, at once and write a humble apology to her Majesty and consider yourself under arrest."

The apology was presented by the heartbroken man, who was then conducted through the gay crowd of courtiers on his way to the Bastille. The Comtesse de Lamotte and her husband, and even the chorus-singer who had personated Marie Antoinette at the tryst, were also arrested, and followed the Cardinal to prison.

But the Cardinal's hour of triumph was at hand. Nobles and populace alike, who already hated the Queen at heart, resented the indignity thus cast on a prince of the Church. He became a popular idol, a scapegoat for the Queen's delinquencies. When he was brought to trial he was received with the honours of a sovereign, and when he was acquitted the whole of France went delirious with rejoicing.

Madame de Lamotte, whose husband, more prudent than his spouse, seized the opportunity to slip across the Channel and try the air of England, fared much worse than her exalted dupe. From the beginning of her sensational trial her conviction was never in doubt for a moment, but even her worst enemy was scarcely prepared for the severe sentence which fell to her lot. She was condemned to be flogged naked and carrying a halter round her neck; to be branded on the shoulder as a felon; and to be confined for life in the Salpêtrière prison.

Over this terrible punishment it is well to draw the curtain. Let it suffice to say that, shrieking

and struggling, she was gagged, and bound hand and foot; that the letter "V" was branded on her shoulder with a red-hot iron, and that, after a severe flogging in the presence of a crowd of onlookers, she was flung half dead into a cab and driven off to the Salpêtrière, where she was compelled to herd with the most degraded and criminal of her sex. No wonder she records that, when she saw the horrible creatures with whom the rest of her days were to be spent, she recoiled with horror, and with tears streaming down her cheeks, exclaimed, "Poor Valois! poor Valois!"

The rest of the Comtesse's romantic and tragic life story is soon told. With the help of outside friends and bribed gaolers she escaped, in disguise, from her prison, and made her way to England, where she rejoined her husband. Here, overwhelmed by debts and pursued by writs, she tried to earn a livelihood by publishing scandalous memoirs, in which Marie Antoinette was held up to the abuse and ridicule of the world. Again and again her silence was purchased; and again and again she broke faith and issued fresh editions of her infamous books, the profits of which were appropriated by her rascally husband.

The agents of the Duc d'Orleans, incensed by her treachery in negotiating with Louis XVI. for the purchase of her memoirs, which she had already sold to them, planned a cruel revenge. Armed with a bogus writ they went to her house with the object of kidnapping her and carrying her off to France, where she would be at their mercy. But Madame was not so easily to be caught. Leaving the room under a pretext she turned the key in the

door, locking her would-be captors in, and sought refuge in the attic of an adjacent house. It was not long, however, before her enemies, enraged at the trick played on them, had found her new hiding-place and were battering at the door.

Escape was now impossible, except through the window ; and that way meant almost certain death. In her terror, however, she chose it, and leaping into space fell a crushed and mutilated heap in the street below. She survived her terrible injuries a few weeks, the end coming on the 26th August 1791. Thus tragically Jeanne de Valois, the descendant of kings, closed, in sordid Lambeth lodgings, one of the most remarkable careers in human history.

## THE TRAGEDY OF A QUEEN OF HEARTS

ONE day, in the year 1646, a woman in peasant garb was plodding wearily along the road from London to Dover, alternately leading by the hand and carrying a bright-eyed, pale-faced child dressed as a boy. Passers-by gave many a sympathetic glance at the forlorn, travel-stained couple, and friendly carters offered them a lift by the way, offers which were politely but firmly declined; while from all who made kindly overtures to him the little "man" turned angrily away, exclaiming, "Go away! I am not a peasant boy—I am the Princess Henrietta, of England"—an exclamation which provoked a warning "Hush!" from the woman and an incredulous laugh from the friendly stranger.

Ludicrous as the child's petulant assertion seemed, it was perfectly true; for the rags of the peasant covered the youngest child of Charles I., King of England. Little more than two years earlier she had been born at Exeter when the Civil War, which was to send her royal father to the scaffold, was raging its fiercest. When Exeter fell, the infant, whose mother had fled, was among the prisoners who came into the none too tender custody of the Parliamentary forces, by whom she and her loyal nurse, Lady Dalkeith, were sent for safety to St James's. When a suitable opportunity

presented itself Lady Dalkeith had clothed herself and her precious charge in peasants' rags and fearfully set forth on the long tramp to Dover, where she succeeded in crossing to France and joining Queen Henrietta Maria at the Court of her fathers.

It was a tragic transition from the splendours of the English Court to the poor apartments which were assigned to the exiled Queen and her child at the Louvre. The annual allowance of 40,000 livres voted by the Parliament of Paris would have sufficed to keep Henrietta Maria in comfort, and even in some degree of luxury; but the greater part of it went to meet the constant demands of her son and his needy followers, and the Queen found herself reduced to terrible straits, often lacking both fire and food. On one occasion, it is said, when Cardinal de Retz called to see the Queen in the depth of winter, he found her shivering in a fireless room by the bedside of her daughter. "You see," was her Majesty's greeting of pitiful apology, "I am keeping Henrietta company. I dare not let the poor child rise to-day as we have no fire." "The fact was," said the Cardinal, when telling the story, "that none of the tradespeople would trust her for anything. It will be difficult for posterity to realise that a princess of England, granddaughter of Henry, the Great, actually wanted a faggot to leave her bed in the Louvre, and in the eyes of the French Court."

Such were the conditions under which the daughter, wife and mother of kings brought up the child who, in later years, was to play such a brilliant *rôle* on the stage of life, and to close a splendid career in tragedy more pitiful even than that which



marked her days of infancy and childhood. But though Henrietta Maria spent her days chiefly in weeping and solitude, too proud to claim her rightful place among the exalted ladies at the French Court, she never ceased to encourage the loftiest ambition for her daughter's future. This ambition was no less than to see her the wife of the boy king Louis XIV., a scheme which had the cordial support of Louis' mother, Anne of Austria.

Seldom has a devoted mother indulged in a hope so seemingly impossible of realisation. As a child, the Princess Henrietta was, says Mr Trowbridge, "not at all pretty, and all her physical defects were heightened by perpetual colds, and toothaches and sore eyes. The complete lack of taste with which her mother dressed her, and a certain blue-stocking air that her intellectual cramming gave her were, moreover, little calculated to excite admiration." It was indeed little likely that the King, one of the handsomest youths in all France, full of romance and the vigour and passion of young life, should give a second glance at the "ugly duckling" who was thus chosen as his future Queen. He much preferred the bright eyes and sprightly fascinations of Mazarin's lovely nieces, with one or other of whom he spent his days in flirting. When Anne arranged a splendid ball to bring the young people together, Louis point-blank refused even to dance with his unattractive cousin; and it was only when his mother declared that if he would not dance with Henrietta he should not dance at all, that he yielded a churlish assent. When it was suggested later that he should marry the plain English Princess, his boyish anger blazed forth. "Marry that ugly

little girl," he exclaimed in disgust. "Never!" And, true to his word, since marry he must, he preferred to choose as the sharer of his throne the dowdy, ill-favoured Infanta, Maria Theresa, a preference which he was not long in regretting.

But the days of obscurity were soon coming to an end for Henrietta and her mother. Her brother, Charles, was restored to the throne of England, amid acclamations and transports of joy; and, as sister of the King of England, the despised Princess now became a very desirable *partie*, especially since, to her new and exalted position, was added an unexpected beauty which the transforming hand of time had cunningly wrought. The "ugly duckling" of childhood had blossomed into a charming girl of seventeen. "Beautiful in the vulgar, plastic sense she was not; yet she created the impression of beauty. The lights in her expressive eyes, the swift changes of her mobile face, spoke to all of the sympathy and gaiety of her temperament. But her chief beauty was her smile of incomparable sweetness, which, while transfiguring her face, captivated all hearts. To these physical fascinations she added a sprightly wit, high spirits and an unrivalled skill in singing and dancing." It is little wonder that a young lady so richly dowered with fascinations should be sought in marriage by the great ones of the earth. The German Emperor, it is said, wooed her and wooed in vain; and when at last she consented to become the wife of Louis' younger brother, Philippe, Duke of Orleans, there were those who said, with truth, that she might have aspired still higher. Her crowning triumph came when, shortly before her marriage, she paid

a visit to the Court of her beloved brother, Charles II. The English people received with open arms the young Princess whose privations and touching devotion to their King were well known to them. Her amiability and, above all, her irresistible smile completed the conquest of their hearts; her public appearances were ovations; and all England rang with praises of her charms and winsomeness.

Henrietta's marriage to Philippe of Orleans was disastrous from the first. If she had sought all France through she could not have found a husband so ill-calculated to make her happy. Of the Duke it is said, "The prettiest child in France' had grown up a man of striking beauty, with not a redeeming virtue. Brought up entirely among women he had acquired an effeminacy that, when clad in women's dress, a costume he frequently affected, it was difficult to believe he belonged to the other sex." To the age of thirteen he had been dressed entirely in girls' clothes, while his favourite companion was Madame de Choisy's son, who was similarly attired.

As a young man this effeminacy became still more marked. Most of his time was spent in dressing himself in gorgeous raiment; he spent hours in rouging and perfuming himself; and thus saturated with femininism he sought lovers of his own sex, on whom he lavished all the raptures of his debased passion. "He was," says Saint-Simon, "a woman, with all her faults and none of her virtues; childish, feeble, fond of gossip, curious, vain, suspicious, incapable of holding his tongue, taking pleasure in spreading slander and making mischief." It was inevitable that marriage to such

a parody of a man should from the first inspire Henrietta with nothing but disgust. "I never loved her after the first fortnight," the Duke once callously declared; and it is more than doubtful whether he ever felt for her the least affection. Even on his wedding-day he left his bride to seek more congenial pleasure among his mignons.

Can one marvel that the proud, high-spirited Princess should turn her back in contempt on her worthless husband and seek her own pleasure elsewhere? Of lovers she had no lack. The handsome Duke of Buckingham, the Comte de Guiche and many another were the slaves of her fascinations; while her brother-in-law, the King, who had so contemptuously spurned her as a child, was now the most ardent of her lovers. Before her dreary honeymoon had waned Louis invited his "beloved sister" to Fontainebleau, where she found herself "the goddess of the palace, the fairy of the fountain, the nymph of the forests." Hunting-parties, balls, ballets, were arranged in her honour on a scale of ultra regal magnificence, and the neglected bride of "Monsieur" reigned as Queen of Louis' Court and heart.

While the real Queen was left in splendid isolation on the pinnacle of rigid Spanish etiquette she loved to enforce, Henrietta was treading the dangerous paths of romance with Louis in the Fontainebleau forest. "The mysterious aisles of the branches," to quote Colonel Haggard, "the hidden grottoes in the rocks, the soft balmy air of summer, all breathed melody and romance around. For Henrietta to share this mystery, to join in the melody of the birds and bees, to roam where the romance of youth

proclaimed a kingdom of the fairies, such was now the will of the autocratic young Monarch. When, at nightfall, Diana's rays shot slantwise through the leafy arches of the woods he bade his sister-in-law, his dear, sprightly cousin, to be his sole companion. Could she refuse the King? No, indeed! Has she not herself told us, 'I would have died sooner than disobey him in anything.' Objecting nothing—careless of opinion, of her own health—the obedient girl remained at times in the forest during those summer nights until the day had dawned ere Louis escorted her home to the Palace."

These days of summer madness, however, could not last for ever. The Queen-Mother was furious when news of them came to her ears; Monsieur was, or affected to be, consumed with rage and jealousy; and between the two Louis had a very unpleasant time, from which he emerged with promises of better behaviour in the future. But kings are no less forgetful of promises or fertile in expedients than their subjects; and under the cloak of making love to Louise de la Vallière, the prettiest of her ladies in waiting, Louis contrived to spend many stolen and blissful hours in the company of Madame. It was not long, however, before his fickle fancy found greater fascination in the lady than in her mistress; and before Madame realised his disloyalty the heart of her royal lover had been transferred to Louise's keeping.

Deserted by the King and by her husband, whose pleasure lay in masquerading as a lady and revelling with his mignons, Henrietta was not long in finding abundant solace in another lover. For a long time Arnaud de Guiche, a handsome cadet of an old

family of the French *noblesse*, had vainly aspired to the favour of the Duchess of Orleans. Dowered with birth, exceptional good looks and charming manners, his ambition was to inspire a grand passion in the Princess, whose fascinations had enslaved him; but to all his overtures Madame, whose heart was better occupied elsewhere, was blind.

Now, however, that the King's ardour had cooled, she was more at liberty to pay attention to less exalted wooers. Her curiosity was piqued; and she at last consented not only to receive but to read the Comte's passionate letters, which were conveyed to her by Mademoiselle Montalais, one of her ladies. The whim seized her to reply to them; and thus an innocent flirtation began which culminated one day when Mademoiselle Montalais ushered into her bedroom a woman dressed as a fortune-teller, the sorceress being none other than the amorous young de Guiche in disguise.

When this escapade reached the ears of Louis through the indiscretion of his new mistress, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, his rage and jealousy knew no bounds. He read her a severe lecture on her wickedness, insisted that Mademoiselle Montalais should be sent about her business, and packed the too gallant young Count off to the wars to cool his ardour. Before leaving, however, de Guiche sought a private interview with the Princess which nearly ended in tragedy. "While the Comte, skilfully smuggled into the Palace, was saying good-bye to Madame, who should be unexpectedly announced but Monsieur, her husband! The ever-vigilant Montalais had only time to whisper a warning, and

the high-flown Guiche was obliged to fling dignity to the winds and escape like some ridiculous *bourgeois* lover in a similar predicament. When Monsieur entered his wife's apartment the Comte de Guiche was in the chimney!"

Now that de Guiche was disposed of, there was no lack of other gallants eager to take his place in Madame's favour; and of these suitors the most daring and successful was the Marquis de Vardes, one of the most debauched, as he was also one of the most handsome and brilliant men at the French Court. But Madame was in no mood to listen to his flatteries and to respond to his advances. She was still mourning the loss of the young Count who had been so summarily taken from her, and her heart was with him on the distant battlefield, where danger and death were his companions. But de Vardes was not the man to be easily spurned. If he could not win her favour by fair means he would not scruple to adopt foul ones, which soon came to his hand.

He managed to get possession of de Guiche's letters to Madame—letters in which the young Count held up Louis to ridicule; and, thus armed, the victory was his. He threatened to show the letters to the King. "In an agony of fear Madame begged and prayed—she would kill herself rather than be exposed." "Very well, then, Madame; you can have them—upon my terms," said the polished villain. "Your terms? Oh, I will consent to any terms!" answered the distracted woman. "What are they? I will agree." "Come to me," said de Vardes, "in the house of the Comtesse de Soissons: I will tell you there before I deliver you up the

letters." Thus it was that Madame found herself helpless in the clutches of the most unprincipled scoundrel in France, who treated his victim with undisguised insolence now that she was in his power. As a sample of his treatment of Madame "he gave her a rendezvous in the house of gallantry, the fashionable parlour of the nunnery of Chaillot, a place much used in those days, under the cloak of visiting the nuns, for meetings between ladies and their lovers. Here he allowed Madame to stay, waiting for him—while, not deigning to keep his appointment, he went about the Court telling his friends where she was to be found." With a worthless husband who cared only for his mignons, with the King's favour withdrawn, with her name bandied about in connection with that of first one disreputable character and then another, low indeed had sunk the name of this royal princess of England, daughter of King Charles I.!

Meanwhile her husband seems to have troubled himself little about Madame's indiscretions, so absorbed was he in his own pursuit of pleasure. The degraded Duke had become more effeminate and debased than ever. Dressed in woman's clothes, painted, patched, affectedly aping woman's ways, Monsieur might now be seen going to balls, hanging, like any other young lady, upon the arm of the Chevalier de Lorraine, a handsome young man as dissolute as himself. Not content with his disgraceful proceedings abroad, the Duke established his latest favourite in the Palais Royal, where he not only ruled as master but encouraged the Duke in his contemptuous and brutal treatment of his wife.



Fortunately it was not long before Madame was able to extricate herself from the terrible tangle in which she now found herself involved. In her despair she threw herself on the clemency of the King, making a frank avowal of all her indiscretions and her predicament, with the result that Louis, his chivalry and anger aroused, sent de Vardes to a dungeon at Montpellier. Lorraine was equally effectually disposed of; for, having discovered some treasonable letters he had written, Madame showed them to the King, and the Chevalier, in spite of the Duke's tears and pleadings, was torn from his side and sent to the dungeon of the Château d'If, near Marseilles.

Thus set free at last from her entanglements Madame reasonably looked forward to a time of peace in which, profiting by her bitter experience, she might hope to live down the memory of her follies. But, as has been truly written, "there is a terrible page in the book of human destinies; at the head of it we read these words—accomplished desires." Madame had drunk deep of the cup of pleasure which her worthless husband had denied her; and, much as she had suffered, the price was not yet paid. Already the clouds of tragedy which were to shroud her life in eclipse were gathering over her head. The loss of his favourite had changed the brutal indifference of her husband into an implacable hate; and he vowed a terrible vengeance on the wife who was the cause of the loss. "He had now two burning desires which dwelt in him evilly like demons; one was the return of the Chevalier; the other the death of Madame."

We must hurry over Madame's visit to England to arrange the treaty which secured her brother's alliance to Louis on disgraceful terms, and tell the story of the closing tragedy of Madame's life. Three weeks after her triumphant return to Paris, she called for a glass of chicory water to quench her thirst (she had imprudently bathed in the Seine two days earlier and had caught a chill); and no sooner had she placed the empty glass down than she exclaimed in accents of horror, "I am poisoned!" At the cry and at the sight of her suffering the palace was thrown into confusion. The King and Queen, summoned from Versailles, arrived to be told that Madame was dying. "They found her writhing on a couch, pale, dishevelled, and scarcely recognisable from the convulsive movements that distorted her features." The doctors, however, pooh-poohed the idea of danger. "It is only colic," they declared, "which will not last more than a few hours"; and, as the poor woman writhed in insupportable agony, the onlookers, thus reassured, talked and laughed and jested with what must have seemed to the dying Princess an inhuman indifference; the most callous of all being her husband, who looked on at her sufferings with the utmost heartlessness.

But Madame knew from the first that she was doomed. To her confessor, the Abbé Bossuet, she declared, "I am dying. I have been poisoned—by mistake"; while to the English Ambassador, who had been summoned, she said, "You see the sad condition I am in. I am going to die. Ah! how I pity the King, my brother, for I am sure that he loses the person in the world who loves

him best." When the ambassador asked her if she thought she had been poisoned, a priest standing near quickly interposed, "Madame, you must answer nobody, but offer up your life as a sacrifice to God." As the end drew near Madame became so resigned to her fate that she was able to observe the symptoms of the coming end. "Look, Madame de La Fayette," she said to one of the watching ladies, with a momentary return of her old gaiety, "look, my nose has shrunk already."

To the last her thought was for others—not for herself. She sent loving messages to her brothers and her distant friends, and tenderly embraced her husband and her royal relatives. After a short sleep she recalled the Abbé Bossuet to her side and told him that she felt she was about to die. Taking the crucifix which, at her request, he handed to her, she kissed it passionately, declaring that "she loved God with all her heart." M. Bossuet continued speaking to her, and she replied as clearly as if she had never been ill, keeping the crucifix pressed to her lips to the last. Then her strength failed; the crucifix dropped from her hands, and just as the first rays of dawn crept into the chamber, she breathed her last.

Was Madame actually poisoned, or did she die a natural death? On this question Saint-Simon throws interesting light. When news reached Louis that Madame was dead he sent for Simon Morel, her *maître d'hôtel*, and after a promise of pardon for whatever he personally might have done, asked him, "Has not Madame been poisoned?" "Yes, Sire," was the answer. "And how and by whom was she poisoned?" He replied it was the Cheva-

lier de Lorraine who had sent the poison from Italy to two of Monsieur's equerries. "And," continued the King, "did my brother know anything of it?" "No, Sire," answered Morel. "None of us three were fools enough to tell him. He cannot keep a secret, and he would have ruined us."

Monsieur's innocence of this crime is further established by the statement of his second wife Madame, "La Palatine," who wrote thus: "A valet de chambre, who was with Madame, and later in my own service, told me that while Monsieur and Madame were at mass on the morning of the fatal day, Effiat (one of Monsieur's equerries) went to the sideboard and taking Madame's glass rubbed the inside with a paper, and that he, the valet, said to him, 'Monsieur d'Effiat, what are you doing in this room, and why do you touch Madame's glass?' Effiat replied, 'I am very thirsty and want something to drink, and the glass being dirty I was cleaning it with some paper.' After dinner Madame asked for some chicory water, and as soon as she had swallowed it, she cried out, 'I am poisoned.' All that were present drank of the same chicory water, but not from the same glass; and so, of course, it did them no harm."

## A CROWNED MADMAN

THERE was joy throughout Bavaria one August day in the year 1845, when the boom of cannon and the jubilant clashing of bells in a hundred steeples announced that the Crown Princess Marie, the "Angel of God," as the good Bavarians called her, had given birth to an heir to the throne. Seldom has a royal infant made its *début* on the world's stage amid greater rejoicing or with a more brilliant life prospect. Queen Theresa held him in her arms at the baptismal font; water from the Jordan was sprinkled on him; great monarchs were his sponsors, and he was given the name Ludwig, after his royal grandfather, then ruling, and after the patron saint on whose day of festival he had been born.

Although the infant was cradled in luxury he grew to boyhood under such conditions of Spartan training as should have made a man of him in the best sense of the word. As boys, he and his younger brother, Otto, were fed on the plainest fare, their only substantial meal of the day consisting of bread and meat and cheese, a frugal diet which led Ludwig, when he came of age, to declare humorously, "Now that I am my own master I mean to have chicken and pudding for dinner every day." That the royal boys, further, should not be able to purchase luxuries for themselves, their pocket-money was limited to the equivalent of two

shillings a week—a stinginess against which Otto rebelled to such an extent that one day, hearing that a sound tooth was worth ten florins, he paid a visit to the nearest dentist and offered him his entire set of teeth, which he declared were of no use to him.

The two princes were also taught trades—Ludwig, that of a builder, and Otto, that of a carpenter; and in this connection an amusing story is told. After Ludwig had completed his short apprenticeship to a stonemason he went proudly to his mother to inform her that now he could lay bricks as cleverly as any man. “But,” said the mother laughingly, “do you think you could make a living at the trade?” “Make my living at it?” was the answer. “Why, I could make a fortune at it; for, if I offered myself as a bricklayer, my master-mason would be glad to take me into partnership, as my name would bring him more business than my hands could do.”

But, in spite of this Spartan and robust training, Ludwig was from his earliest years a dreamer. One day, so the story goes, his tutor found him curled up on a couch in a darkened room. “Your Highness,” he said, “ought to have something to occupy you. You must find the time very tedious.” “Not at all,” the boy answered; “I think of lots of things and am perfectly happy.” And so it always was with him. He would lie on his back for hours, dreamily watching the drifting clouds; he would gaze spellbound at the shining expanse of a lake, lost to the material world in a world of his own; while the glories of sunrise or sunset would transport him into ecstasies. Once, it is said, he was



LOUIS II., KING OF BAVARIA.





found at midnight sitting in a deep reverie among the tombs in the churchyard at Berchtesgaden.

His happiest hours of boyhood were those spent at the lovely castle of Hohenschwangau in its romantic environment of mountains and lakes, where he would converse with his knightly ancestors pictured on the walls, weave romances round mythical Rhine maidens, and listen greedily to stories of goblins, sprites and gnomes. In the presence of strangers he was morbidly shy, refusing to speak to or even look at them; while he exhibited the utmost repugnance to ugliness in any form. Such was his horror that if anyone ill-favoured came into his presence he would resolutely close his eyes or hide himself behind curtains, until the offensive presence was withdrawn.

Was the boy mad? There is little doubt that, even in these early years, the insanity which so tragically eclipsed his life in later years had begun to manifest itself, as the following story, one of many, seems to prove. One day, a Court official, walking through a remote part of the palace grounds at Berchtesgaden, came upon a strange spectacle. Otto lay on the ground gagged and bound, hand and foot, while around his throat was a handkerchief which his brother, Ludwig, was twisting tightly by means of a piece of stick. When the official in alarm rushed to the rescue of the boy, who was almost black in the face, Ludwig stoutly resisted him, shrieking, "This has nothing to do with you. This is my vassal; he has opposed my will and I am going to kill him." And it was only by the exercise of considerable force that the unhappy Otto was delivered from a terrible fate.

In spite, however, of his dreaminess and morbid shyness Ludwig was not lacking in manly qualities. He became skilled beyond most of his fellows in many athletic accomplishments. He was an expert fencer and horseman; could swim and shoot with skill; and was passionately fond of all things warlike—the flash of bayonets, the tramp of armed men, the blare of trumpets and all the pomp and circumstance of war. Of his early days of horsemanship, by the way, an amusing and characteristic story is told. One day, while learning to ride, the horse threw him and, as he lay in the sawdust, his instructor was imprudent enough to laugh at his predicament. The Prince was furious, and, as he rose to his feet, exclaimed, “I wish you would be good enough to teach me to fall in a way that would not amuse you. There should be nothing comical in an accident which might happen to a good rider before a hundred thousand men.”

To his accomplishments the Prince, as he grew towards manhood, added a rare physical beauty.

“At eighteen,” writes one who knew him, “he presented a most striking appearance; he was, indeed, the most idealistic youth I have ever seen. His figure, tall, slight and graceful, had perfect symmetry of form; his luxuriant hair, slightly curled, gave his head a resemblance to those magnificent works of ancient art in which we find the first manifestations of the Hellenic idea of manly strength.” But his most remarkable feature was his eyes, “large, grey and luminous, magnetic, with the indescribable plaintiveness of one set apart, veritable windows through which were caught sudden and bewildering glimpses of a dis-

traught soul." It was those eyes, magnetic, haunting and inexpressibly sad, which more than anything else revealed the disordered brain that lay behind them.

That there must have been some strange fascination about this young Prince is proved by the enthusiastic tributes paid to him by Wagner, whose patron he was. "He is so handsome and intelligent," wrote the great composer, "so splendid and so full of soul, that I fear lest his life should vanish like a fleeting dream of gods in this vulgar world. . . . Of the magic of his eye, you can form no notion; if only he be granted life—it is too rare a miracle."

Such was Ludwig when, at the age of eighteen, he succeeded, amid almost delirious rejoicing, to the throne of Bavaria on his father's death. And seldom has a king's reign opened more auspiciously. For a time Ludwig, by a supreme effort, seems to have shaken off his morbid and solitary habits, and to have devoted himself whole-heartedly to his new and responsible duties. He presided at councils; received ambassadors with captivating grace of manner; and won all hearts by his amiability and clemency. He held reviews of his soldiers, making a gallant figure as, with plumed helmet and gold spurs, he rode on to the Field of Mars mounted on a white charger and surrounded by a brilliant galaxy of his generals; and we get another impressive picture of him as, with bare head and reverend mien, he walked behind the Host, attended by bishops and princes, ministers of state and councillors through the garlanded streets of his capital.

Never did a king seem less mad than this

“hope and pride of Bavaria,” this handsome young monarch who captivated every heart he ruled. But the madness was all there; and, in spite of all his efforts, was gaining daily, as we shall soon see.

Not many months after Ludwig had come to his throne Bavaria heard with delight that he had chosen a bride to share it with him—none other than his cousin, the beautiful and universally-beloved Princess Sophie Charlotte. Medals were struck in honour of the auspicious event; hundreds of hands worked day and night to prepare for the coming festivities; and, at a cost of a million gulden, a magnificent bridal carriage, adorned with rose-wreathed Cupids and ablaze with gold decorations, was built for the royal couple. Ludwig was ideally happy, and spent his days driving his bride-to-be through the cheering avenues of Munich, or wooing her in a boat on Lake Starnberg. And then, when the tide of joyful anticipation was at its very height, and when the preparations for the splendid nuptials were almost complete, *Ludwig refused point-blank to go to the altar*; the bride was sent home in tears; and his subjects were left to make the best of their disappointment.

Another would-be bride was soon found for the fickle monarch—an Austrian archduchess, who was confident that the King could not resist her beauty and fascinations. One day when Ludwig was walking moodily in his private garden he came, at a turn of the pathway, face to face with this charming young lady gathering roses in affected ignorance of his proximity. Glancing up in surprise she saw the young King's eyes ablaze with anger, and she

was greeted with such a torrent of abuse that she fled from him in terror and tears, and nothing would induce her to meet him a second time.

The King's insanity, of which his heartless treatment of the ladies designed as his brides was, no doubt, a manifestation, now became more pronounced. His boyish love of solitude returned in an aggravated form, and was allied to eccentricities of which strange and almost incredible stories are told. In fact from this time forth he was hopelessly mad. By day, we are told, he was assailed by nameless and horrible fears; at night he would dream of bloodstained faces, with flaming hair, circling over his bed and watching him with mocking and hissing lips, until, in his dread and agony, he would rush out of the palace, mount a horse, and ride madly through the night, through dark forests, and by frowning precipices—anywhere to escape the horrible phantoms of his brain; or, in less excited moods, he would repair to a hut hidden away in the heart of a neighbouring wood, clothe himself in skins, and while away the hours by playing on a reed.

In his more lucid intervals he would summon opera-singers to his palace and listen to their singing as he floated dreamily over the lake in the winter garden he had constructed on his palace roof. In this garden of wonders and delights "large branched palms waved their graceful leaves, rare orchids of varied hues bloomed in prodigal profusion, parroquets flitted to and fro, and lotus blossoms covered the still waters on which the golden boat floated. The roof was garlanded with countless roses; fountains played musically; on the

walls mountain landscapes were painted so skilfully as to give an impression of space and distance ; and the waters of the lake were coloured blue and scented with violets."

When the mood seized him he would take as companion in his boat the favourite opera-singer of the moment, of one of whom an entertaining story is told. The favoured lady was Fräulein Schefszky, a *prima donna* of opulent charms and commensurate vanity. In an impulse of mischievous daring this lady, observing that Ludwig was lost in reverie, passed her fingers through his hair. The consequence was instantaneous and startling. The King, furious at such familiarity, pushed the fräulein away so violently that he upset the boat, and he and his companion, drenched and disillusioned, had to be rescued by means of a boat-hook.

At other times Ludwig, attired as Lohengrin, with sword, shield and towering crest, would spend the night on the lake in a gilded, shell-shaped coracle, drawn by a swan, while vari-coloured lamps and torches lit up the scene, feather fans cooled the air, and soft music came stealing from between the thick curtains of foliage. Or he would listen to Wagner's operas seated alone, the only listener in a theatre shrouded in darkness, occasionally, if anything displeased him, breaking out in a fury of abuse of the unfortunate performers.

On one such occasion, when the King was the sole audience, a curious scene took place. In the piece a great storm is introduced ; the theatre thunder rolled, the theatre wind blew, the noise of rain falling began. The King grew more and more

excited, he was carried out of himself. He called from his box in a loud voice, "Good, very good! Excellent! But I wish to have real rain. Turn on the water!" The manager ventured to remonstrate; he spoke of the ruin to the decorations, the silk and velvet hangings, and so on; but the King would not listen. "Never mind, never mind! I wish to have real rain. Turn on the cocks!" So it was done. The water deluged the stage; it streamed over the painted flowers, the painted hedges and the summer houses; the singers in their fine costumes were wet from head to foot; but they tried to ignore the situation. They sang on bravely. The King was in the seventh heaven. He clapped his hands and cried, "Bravo! More thunder! More lightning! Make it rain harder! Let all the pipes loose! More! More! I will hang anyone who dares to put up an umbrella!"

As the years passed, Ludwig's love of solitude grew on him to such an extent that even in his palaces he could nowhere find the seclusion his moods demanded. At such times he would disappear suddenly and mysteriously to some remote village, where he could stay *perdu* at an inn or farmhouse. If by any chance he were recognised he would vanish again to seek an asylum elsewhere, where none saw in the moody, taciturn stranger the King of Bavaria. When his ministers remonstrated with him on these absences he would answer, "It is incumbent on a Prince to meditate on the duties of his calling, which he can surely do better when alone with God and nature than in the confusion of a Court."

It was not only in these directions that Ludwig's

insanity manifested itself. He developed a mania for building new palaces, and equipping them at fabulous cost. Not content with his sumptuous and stately castle of Hohenschwangau, he built, on the spur of an adjacent mountain over 3000 feet high, a still more splendid pile, Neuschwanstein—a castle, according to Mennell, which “far surpasses any building of modern times, and is the Walhalla of artistic minds.” While Neuschwanstein was rearing its towers, minarets, and spires to the skies he began to build another palace, called Linderhof, more magnificent still, modelled on the famous Trianon. A castle, this, of white marble of spectral beauty, crowded from roof to floor with the rarest furniture money could buy, with gold-framed mirrors, busts in marble and bronze, priceless tapestries, Sèvres vases and figures, and bric-à-brac gathered, regardless of cost, from all quarters of the world. One of the many magnificent rooms in this palace of wonders was crowded with silver and gold ornaments set with precious stones, furniture and curtains of velvet or silk, richly embroidered hangings or Gobelins tapestry, copied from the tapestry woven for Louis XIV. under the direction of André and Boucher; magnificent clocks, candelabras, brackets, and hanging lustres and lights, all reflected by a hundred mirrors set in gold frames.

The gardens, with their terraces and lawns, statues and lakes, were made a miracle of beauty; while near was a blue grotto designed to imitate that wonderful product of nature at Capri. By an electrical contrivance the waters of this grotto assumed in turn all the colours of the rainbow,



while Ludwig, dressed as Lohengrin, floated on them in a splendid barge drawn by swans. Higher up, in the thickest part of the woods, he built a hut, which in all ways resembled that in one of the scenes of Wagner's opera *Walküre*. Here, when he grew weary of the splendours of his Trianon Palace, he would come for change, and spend his time, dressed in skins, playing upon a reed.

Still Ludwig's ambition was not satisfied. Another palace, still more splendid than its two predecessors, was begun on the desolate island of Herrenworth, the centre of a large lake bordering the great forest of Chiemsee. On this island, remote from the ways of men, environed by an unbroken solitude, the mad King proposed to erect a palace which should eclipse all the splendours of Versailles. But this palace of fairy enchantment was destined never to be completed. The part that is completed, however, is of almost indescribable splendour; especially the Hall of Mirrors with its prodigal decoration of gold and rich carving, and with its thirty-three golden lustres holding 2500 candles. "It is literally true," says Dr Alexander M. Smith, "that after seeing the magnificence of the apartments in Herrenschiemsee, the Czar's rooms in the Winter Palace are simply commonplace, and Windsor Castle seems barren and shabby. As for the Mirror-room, there is nothing on earth can vie with it in richness." But in all this ultra regal magnificence Ludwig could find no enjoyment. "With great difficulty," says the author of "Ludwig II. u. die Kunst," "was a wink of sleep to be had in

the *lit de repos* (which, by the way, was large enough to accommodate a dozen sleepers, and the curtains and quilts of which had taken seven years to embroider); the dining-table was so laden with gilt supports that there was no room for the King's legs. The writing-table was almost useless from the quantity of china and heavy brass with which it was laden."

While Ludwig was squandering millions on his new palaces, his poor distracted brain gave him no peace night or day. Unable to sleep, he spent many of the night hours racing through the darkness in a sleigh drawn by six swift horses. "The sudden appearance of the royal sleigh at night in some unexpected quarter," says Mennell, "seems like a scene out of a fairy-tale. As it approaches it looks like a golden swan with wings displayed. Within, one may see the pale-faced King reclining upon richly-embroidered blue velvet cushions. The interior of the sleigh is lit up by a soft but brilliant electric light. It dashes by the wondering spectator, who has hardly time to notice the *agrafe* of brilliants which adorns the artist's hat worn by the King, or the uniform of the young *aide-de-camp* by his side."

There is little doubt that Ludwig's mental malady was aggravated when his younger brother, Otto, was pronounced insane and was placed under restraint in the castle of Nymphenbourg. His grief at parting from his beloved brother was heart-rending, and from that moment he seems to have realised that a similar fate would inevitably overtake himself. He shrank more and more from his fellow-men, and his insanity began to manifest itself in new and startling ways. He would, for

instance, spit in the faces of his servants, and, when they offended him in the slightest degree, assaulted them so violently that thirty were more or less seriously injured, while one died from his blows. He inflicted the most grotesque punishments on those who incurred his displeasure; a valet who had dared to look him in the face was condemned to wear a black mask for a year, and a footman was made to dress as a fool and ride a donkey through the streets of Munich.

He refused to hold any communication with his ministers, except through his grooms and stable-boys. One day he had a fantastic notion of founding a kingdom in Arabia; the next he threatened to banish his ministers to America. In his lighter moods he would have a carriage drawn by peacocks; or would smoke opium, and drink Rhine wine and champagne served in a crystal bowl, with rose-leaves and violets floating on its surface. And these were but a few of the grotesque eccentricities which now placed his madness beyond all question. His subjects, who had borne the burden of his extravagance and had tolerated his insane freaks so long and so patiently, began at last to clamour for his deposition. They had lost none of the old love he had won as a boy; but he was mad, hopelessly mad, and unfit to reign over them. A commission was appointed to inquire into his insanity, and reported that "the mind of his Majesty is completely darkened; he is rendered incapable of exercising the functions of government and this incapability is incurable." When news of this report and his threatened deposition reached Ludwig his rage knew no bounds. "I could endure to

have the government taken from me," he exclaimed ; " but to be declared insane, that I cannot outlive."

When the commissioners appointed to inform the King of his deposition arrived at Neuschwanstein, they found the castle guarded by a battalion of soldiers whom the King had summoned to his assistance ; while from all directions poured fierce, brawny-armed peasants ready to shed the last drop of their blood in defence of the Sovereign they loved so well in spite of his madness ; and so menacing was the aspect of things that they were obliged to beat an ignominious retreat. When, however, they returned on the following day, so alarmed had the King's defenders become at his threats to commit suicide, that they were admitted.

" Suddenly," says Dr Müller, one of the commissioners, " we heard a firm tread, and a man of imposing height stood at the entrance of the corridor and conversed in short, decisive sentences with a servant, who exhibited an almost slavish deference. The keepers came from their places above and below. At the same moment we went towards the room the King had left and cut off his return. With great promptitude two of the keepers had seized the King by the arms. Dr Gudden came forward and said, ' Majesty, this is the saddest task that has ever fallen to my lot. Your Majesty's case has been studied by four specialists on madness, and from the report made by them, your Majesty's uncle, Prince Luitpold, has been entrusted with the regency. I shall have the honour of conducting your Majesty to the Castle of Berg.' " The King allowed himself to be led to his bedroom and there, " pale and haggard, with wild eyes and twitching

lips," he awaited the carriage which soon conveyed him to the castle, which for one brief day was to be his prison and asylum.

And now the end of this tragic and pathetic story draws swiftly near. On the day following his removal to Berg, Ludwig, who appeared calm at last and resigned to his fate, was taken by Dr Gudden, his medical attendant, for a walk in the castle grounds. The darkness fell, the rain began to fall heavily, and neither had returned. A feeling of anxiety gave place to one of alarm and consternation. Searching parties were despatched with lanterns in all directions to look for the missing monarch and his companion; and as a last resource a boat was sent to explore the dark waters of the lake.

"We were not rowing," says Dr Müller, "when Huber suddenly cried out and sprang into the water, which reached to his chest; he clasped in his arms a body which was floating down the stream. It was the King in his shirt-sleeves. A few steps behind came a second corpse—Dr Gudden. I drew him into the boat and was rowed to the shore. There the keepers came to help us, and we lifted the bodies out of the boat. Both were, as I said at the time, without pulse or breath; the stiffness of death had already set in. . . . On our arrival at the castle the examination was gone into. While the King's body showed no marks of violence, Gudden's face was covered with scratches. Over the right eye was a large black mark, or bruise, as if given by a blow of the fist. The face of the dead King wore a gloomy, domineering, almost tyrannical expression; Gudden's features had the

kindly smile which in life had made him so many friends. . . ." The physician had sacrificed his life in a vain attempt to save that of his royal master.

A few days later the King's body lay in the chapel of the royal castle at Munich, under a pall of blue silk, smothered with flowers, the tribute of his mourning subjects. From far and near thousands flocked to pray and weep by his bier. Seldom have been witnessed such scenes of grief as were seen in this church, dark save for the lights standing like sentinels around the blue-draped catafalque. None remembered now the long tale of his later follies and extravagances. Death had effaced them all and there only remained the memory of "our Ludwig," the handsome, gifted, generous King who had won all hearts while he was yet a boy.

## THE REINCARNATION OF A PRINCESS

A FAMILIAR figure in the streets of Brussels a century and a half ago was that of a silver-haired, benevolent-looking old lady, who still retained traces of youthful beauty and who wore an air of distinction out of keeping with the plainness, almost shabbiness, of her attire. As she passed along the streets of the Belgian capital many a head was turned for a second glance at a face which, with its mingled sweetness and dignity, was somehow different from other faces, and many wondered who she was. To a few it was known that her name was Madame d'Aubant; that she lived unobtrusively in a small house in the suburbs; and that when she left her house it was usually on some errand of charity to the poorer quarter of the town. Curious neighbours had tried to pierce the veil of mystery which enveloped her; but their curiosity was met by Madame d'Aubant with silence, or polite evasions. Of her past she resolutely declined to speak.

That she had "seen better days" was a fact obvious to the least observant. Her quiet dignity of speech and bearing, her grace and courtesy, all pointed to a past far removed from her present; but how far removed that past was and through what romantic and tragic vicissitudes she had since come, none dreamt in their most extravagant

speculations; for Madame d'Aubant, who led her peaceful life amid the shabby gentility of a Brussels suburb, had been born to one of the most splendid destinies in Europe, and had at one time had an Imperial crown within her reach. More remarkable still, half-a-century earlier many of the royalties of Europe had actually worn mourning for her and made pilgrimages to her grave.

More than seventy years before this story opens, this lady of mystery had been cradled in a palace amid general rejoicing—the daughter of Lewis Rudolphus, Duke of Brunswick Wölffenbuttel, and Christina Louise, Princess of Oettingen. The infant had in her veins the blood of a hundred kings, and to this proud heritage was added that of beauty. As a blue-eyed child, with her little head running over with golden curls, the merry, mischief-loving princess was the pet of her father's Court and the idol of his subjects. They called her the "fairy princess"; and, as she flitted and danced through the corridors of her palace-home, she seemed indeed, to quote a contemporary writer, "more like a lovely elf than a creature of flesh and blood." And this childish promise of beauty was realised as she grew to young womanhood, "tall and of indescribable grace of carriage and movement, her dainty head crowned with coils of hair which seemed to have caught the sunshine in its meshes, eyes blue as violets and dancing with the joy of life, a complexion of dazzling fairness, and a small mouth, of exquisite sweetness."

Such was the enthusiastic description, by one who knew her, of the Princess Charlotte Louise on the threshold of womanhood; and when, to these



physical charms, we add a sunny disposition, a sprightly wit and a heart full of tenderness and sympathy, which manifested themselves in a thousand acts of charity to the poor, we get some conception of the fascination which the young Princess exercised over the hearts and minds of all.

It was inevitable that such a peerless young lady should soon have lovers by the score at her feet. From almost every court in Europe men of high degree came to woo her; but to one and all she turned a cold, if adorable, shoulder. She was too young, she declared, to sacrifice her treasured freedom to any lover, however eligible and highly placed; and, so far, none had come who could even touch her heart. It was at this period, so the story is told, that the Princess, while at Berlin, paid a visit to a fortune-teller. "Accompanied by a maid, and shabbily dressed, she presented herself before the 'magician' to discover what the future had in store for her. 'I see you,' said the prophet as he gazed into his crystal, 'standing before the altar in a great cathedral. By your side is a tall handsome young man in a gorgeous uniform with many decorations. He is a Prince and heir to a great Throne. . . . Now,' he continued, 'I see a churchyard. It is night, and round an open grave stands a small knot of people under the flickering light of a torch; the coffin is lowered and the mourners walk away talking together in whispers. . . . The scene changes. Now there appears a low, rambling house standing in a large expanse of country. It is some distant land, across the seas; and in front of the house I see you walking, holding a little

girl by the hand and chatting brightly to a middle-aged soldierly man who walks by your side. . . .’ ‘Enough,’ exclaimed the girl, half in fright and half in impatience. ‘This is impossible, absurd—it cannot possibly be me that you see.’ ‘That is as you please,’ answered the magician placidly: ‘I can only tell you what the crystal reveals; and, strange as it may seem, time will certainly bring all to pass that I have told you.’”

The Princess had dismissed this disturbing incident from her memory, or if she recalled it at all, it was only to dismiss it again with a merry laugh, when there came to her father’s Court a suitor more handsome than any who had preceded him. The new-comer was none other than Alexei Petrovitch, eldest son of Peter the Great and heir to the throne of Russia. Towering head and shoulders over the tallest courtiers, broad-shouldered, dark-eyed and handsome above his fellows, this young Russian seemed to the Princess a veritable king of men, her ideal of a lover and a husband; and it was not long before the citadel of her heart capitulated to his bold assaults. If she remembered at all the prince of the crystal-vision it was only to smile happily at the strange coincidence; and no fear for the future entered the heart in which love now reigned supreme. She would some day be an empress, like her sister Elizabeth; and she knew that she would always rule the heart of her consort, who was so passionately, almost fiercely, devoted to her.

A few months later the “fairy princess,” as lovely and supremely happy a girl as ever wore a bridal veil, was led to the altar by the Tsarevitch of Russia, to the clashing of bells and the booming of cannon,

and amid universal rejoicings. It was an ideal union, the world thought; but those who knew the bridegroom's character feared, and with reason, for what was to come. In Russia strange stories were told of Alexei's doings—how he was subject to attacks of uncontrollable rage, in which he would seek to kill any who gave him offence; how he found his chief pleasures among the lowest associates, drinking and revelling with them, and indulging in vulgar amours. Alexei was mad, so they declared, a man who ought to be placed under control.

For a few brief weeks Charlotte's dreams of happiness were more than realised. Her husband worshipped her, was not happy apart from her, and surrounded her with evidences of his passionate devotion. But ardour so fierce as this could not last long with Alexei, as those who knew him confidently predicted. Before the honeymoon had long waned, he grew weary of his pretty toy; his low companions and pursuits called him back; and, for the first time, the horrible truth began to dawn on Charlotte that the husband to whom she had surrendered her happiness was a heartless, debased man.

Any lingering doubts she may have had as to his true character were soon dispelled. From neglecting his wife, and driving her to despair by his coldness and his low amours, of which he boasted to her, he began to treat her with physical violence. On the slightest provocation, even without the least semblance of it, he would strike her, or lock her for days in her bedroom. On three occasions he tried to poison her, and each failure seemed to fan

the flames of his insane hatred. Even when he knew that she was expecting to become a mother, the knowledge, so far from softening him, added to his cruelty, until one day the crowning scene in this tragedy of wedded life came. In one of his paroxysms of rage, he knocked her down, kicked her repeatedly as she lay senseless on the ground at his feet, and left her bathed with blood to join his companions at a low tavern. When, a few hours later, news was brought to him that his wife's life was despaired of, he rose unsteadily to his feet, shattered his glass in a hundred fragments on the floor, and shrieked, "Let her die! The sooner the better!" When a second messenger arrived to inform him that his wife had died, after giving birth prematurely to a daughter, he muttered in maudlin tones, "That's all right. Bury the ——! get her out of the way as soon as you can."

A few hours later, at dead of night, a coffin was carried stealthily out of the palace, placed on a waiting cart, and, accompanied by four or five mourners, was conveyed to a neighbouring cemetery, where a grave had already been prepared. There, as seen in the prophet's vision, the coffin was silently lowered into the grave by the light of a flickering torch, and as the first spadeful of earth fell on it, the mourners returned to the palace. The Princess Charlotte was dead to the world, and mourning was worn in more than one European court over a life cut so tragically short.

That she was not actually dead we know. The report of her death, and the mock funeral, were part of a clever scheme devised by a few faithful retainers to free their mistress once for all from the

tyranny of her brutal husband ; and the short burial service was read, not over her body, but *over a log of wood which took her place in the coffin*. Meanwhile the Princess herself was lying between life and death, unconscious of the methods her friends were taking to rescue her from a life of misery. Under the direction of the Countess of Königsmark, mother of the future celebrated Maréchal Saxe, her jewels and most prized private belongings were gathered together ; and long before the day dawned she was smuggled out of the palace, and in the company of one of her ladies of the chamber, and an old and trusted man-servant, was taken by slow stages to Paris, to begin her life anew, away from the splendours and horrors of the Court she had left for éver.

Many weeks passed before health returned to Charlotte, and with it the glad knowledge that she was free at last from the brutalities of her husband. As the wife of the heir to the Russian throne she was dead ; she would lay aside for ever her royal rank, and in the low, obscure walks of life would try to recover some of the happiness she had lost. But she realised that in Paris there was no safety for her. At any moment she might be seen and recognised by someone who knew her—a thought which naturally filled her with dread. She must fly somewhere—anywhere, to the other side of the world, where at least she might hope to live unknown. A few weeks later, with her two loyal attendants, she found herself across the Atlantic, in the new colony of Louisiana, which then held but a sprinkling of rough and widely scattered settlers among the savage natives.

At last she felt that she could breathe the air of freedom and live in peace without any fear of detection. But could she? Before she had been many days in Louisiana she was recognised by a man who had seen her as a beautiful girl—the Chevalier d’Aubant, a soldier who, like herself, had retired from the world to that distant colony. There could be no possible mistake. The pale-faced, sad-eyed lady could be none other than the lovely Princess whom he had seen both at Brunswick and Berlin, and to whose beauty he had drunk many a toast with his brother officers. Happily she did not recognise him—nor was she likely to, for he was but one of thousands of her unknown admirers—and no word of recognition should escape his lips. That she was in trouble was a sufficient appeal to his chivalry, apart from his past admiration of her beauty. Alone in a strange and wild land she would need a friend, and it should be his privilege to be that friend.

Making the acquaintance of her man-servant, he discovered that Madame Hersfeld, as she chose to be known, wished to make a settlement on the banks of the Mississippi, and he gallantly offered to make all the necessary arrangements, secretly supplementing her small resources with his own. Thus informally installed as madame’s business agent (for to her the chivalrous stranger was nothing else), he accompanied her and her small retinue of two loyal servants into the far interior of Louisiana, where he had a comfortable if unpretentious house made for her by the waters of the Mississippi. At last the unhappy lady had found the peace she sought. To her the splendours of

Court life were but a dim memory, the brutalities of her husband but the recollection of a troubled dream. The vast solitudes of the American prairie-land soothed her unrest; and, surrounded by the ministrations of her three devoted friends, life became to her once more a thing to be desired and enjoyed.

It is little to be wondered at that, thrown constantly into the society of a charming woman, whose beauty and helplessness made such an appeal to his chivalry, M. d'Aubant should be in danger of completely losing his heart; or that the Princess, touched by his loyalty and devotion, should begin to feel a tenderer sentiment than that of gratitude for her protector, who was, moreover, a handsome man in the prime of life.

One day the Chevalier felt himself impelled to tell the Princess that he had from their first meeting known the secret of her identity, an announcement which alarmed and distressed her very much. Was she never to find safety, even in this remote corner of the world?—was she always to be pursued by this spectre of her unhappy past? But her fears were soon allayed. "You may rest assured, madame," said the Chevalier, "that your secret is as safe with me as in your own breast. I would die a hundred deaths rather than betray your trust in me." And thus a new link was forged in the chain which bound these two lives together.

At last news came that Alexei Petrovitch was dead. He had ended his days miserably in a Russian prison; and the last shadow which had clouded the Princess's life was thus removed. She was now free to order her life as she would;

and the first use she made of her new liberty was to reward the devotion of her friend—who had now become much more than a friend—the Chevalier d'Aubant. And a few weeks later the Princess, widow of the heir to the Russian throne and sister to the German Empress, became the wife of a retired army captain in the wilds of Louisiana.

Then followed a period of happiness such as she had not known since the days of her girlhood; of quiet, peaceful days with the husband who idolised her; and, a year later, her happiness was crowned by the birth of a daughter who brought sunshine into their home. One day while she was walking with her husband and her little girl the vision of the Berlin clairvoyant flashed across her mind, and she told her husband the story of her romantic adventure and of the pictures of her future which the crystal had revealed and which had been so accurately realised—impossible, even grotesque, though they appeared at the time.

After a few years of this idyllic life M. d'Aubant was attacked by an internal disease which needed the utmost surgical skill if his life was to be saved; and for this purpose a return to Europe was unavoidable. The property in Louisiana was sold; the home in which so many happy years had been spent was broken up, and the Chevalier, with his wife and child, found themselves in Paris. The Princess might well have thought that after these long years of absence all fear of recognition, even in the capital of France, was at an end. But she had not been many days in Paris when, as she was walking with her daughter in the Tuileries gardens,



she met the Count de Saxe face to face. The recognition was instant and mutual. The Count raised his hat and with a profound bow greeted the Princess whom he had so often met at the Russian Court. That she was not dead he probably knew, for had not his mother been the chief instrument in her escape? The Princess was horrified at this unfortunate meeting; and in her dismay begged the Count not to betray her. "As regards the world at large," answered the Count, "I shall be happy to do as you wish, madame; but I shall consider it my duty to inform his Majesty of your presence in Paris." "But not at once," pleaded madame, "give me a little time that I may arrange my affairs." "I regret deeply, madame," was the answer, "that I have no option in the matter. I must inform the King; but I will give you my word of honour not to do so until three months have elapsed."

Long, however, before this period had gone the Chevalier, restored to health, had obtained from the French East India Company the post of Mayor of the Island of Bourbon, and with his wife and child had set sail for the Indian Ocean; and when at last her secret was revealed to Louis XV., his Majesty promptly wrote to the Governor of Bourbon instructing him to treat Madame d'Aubant with the utmost respect and attention, and to the Queen of Hungary informing her of the whereabouts of the aunt she had so long mourned as dead.

Every effort was made by her royal relatives to induce Madame d'Aubant to leave her husband and to resume her rank and place in the world;

but to all appeals and remonstrances she turned a deaf ear. And in Bourbon she remained until, having lost both husband and daughter, she returned to Europe to spend in retirement and good deeds the remaining years of her troubled life.

## THE ROMANCE AND MYSTERY OF PAMELA

ANYONE who walks through the famous Cemetery of Montmartre may see, among the splendid monuments of long-gone greatness, a modest tombstone which bears the one word PAMELA. There is no other clue, not even a date, to enlighten the stranger as to whose dust it is that lies below; and to the question that must have sprung to thousands of lips, "Who was Pamela?" there is no answer.

Not many miles away, in the splendid galleries of Versailles, is a picture called "La Leçon de Harpe," which represents a girl of exquisite beauty and grace, in the act of turning over the leaves of a music-book; and if one asks the custodian who was the original of this presentment of youth and loveliness, the answer is "Pamela," as if the single word were all the explanation that could be offered.

Who was Pamela, this maiden of the music lesson and of the modest tomb with its enigmatic epitaph? When she lived, in all the radiance of her beauty, the playmate of royal children, or later, as the wife of a duke's son, none could answer this question satisfactorily; and to-day, a century later, it is as inscrutable as ever.

In the year 1777 there was a flutter of excitement in the nursery of the children of the Duc de Chartres, later Duc d'Orleans, and near kinsman of the King, for Madame de Genlis, their gover-

ness, had told her royal charges that they would soon have a charming playfellow, who was coming all the way from England to share their games and studies; and when at last the little stranger arrived the children found all their eager expectations more than realised, for the new-comer was a child of extraordinary beauty—and, what was more to the point, as merry and mischievous as she was lovely.

Who was this little fairy and where had she come from, were questions asked by many a curious person outside the household. Great lords and ladies of the Court asked them; and tongues wagged mischievously in many a salon and boudoir. Some were bold enough to declare that the little stranger was the unacknowledged daughter of Madame de Genlis, whom she had thus smuggled under her care; others, more venturesome still, more than suspected that the child would not be far wrong in calling the Duc de Chartres “father,” and her royal playmates brothers and sisters; while a few combined these conflicting speculations, and vowed that while the Duc was her father, Madame was her mother.

Madame de Genlis was perfectly frank as to the identity of the new inmate of the nursery. Her explanation was simplicity itself. It was her wish, she said, and that of the Duc, that her charges should have as companion a little English girl, to share their play and their work. Mr Forth, a gentleman of the Duc’s household, had been sent to England to find a suitable child. During his wanderings Mr Forth had discovered in a small town in Hampshire the very child he was in search

of—a blue-eyed, golden-haired, winsome little maid of five summers, a fairy creature all sunshine and laughter.

The little one's mother, who was living in great poverty, told the following story. A few years earlier, as Mary Simms, a girl of humble birth, she had been wooed and won by a Mr Seymour, a man of good family, who had run away with her to Newfoundland. There, their child, who was christened Nancy, was born; and a little later the father had died. After her husband's death the widow returned to England with her little girl; and, as her husband had been disinherited, and his relatives disowned her, she had been compelled to work for her living as best she could, earning barely sufficient to support herself and her daughter. When Mr Forth begged permission to take the little girl away, painting in glowing colours the brilliant future that awaited her as a *protégée* of a royal prince, the distracted mother declared, with tears, that she could not possibly live without her child; and it was only after long pleading and argument that, for her girl's sake, she at last consented to part with her.

“When I began to be really attached to Pamela (the name which I had given her),” Madame de Genlis continued, “I was very uneasy lest her mother might wish to claim her by legal process; that is, lest she might threaten to do so in order to obtain money which it might have been out of my power to give. I consulted several English lawyers, and they told me that, in order to protect myself, I was to get the mother to give me her daughter as an apprentice, in return

for a payment of twenty-five guineas." This she succeeded in doing; the necessary agreement was prepared and signed, and Pamela was given into madame's custody until she came of age.

Such was Madame Genlis' story of how Pamela became an inmate of the Duc de Chartres' nursery at the Palais Royal; but, circumstantial as it was, it by no means silenced the tongue of slander, which persisted in hinting that Pamela was far from being the stranger she was represented to be. Indeed her strong likeness to her playfellows was alone sufficient to lend colour to the talk of the Court and of society; for, as a contemporary writer says, "her astonishing resemblance to the Duke's children would have made her pass for their sister, were it not for her foreign accent."

Pamela, happily innocent of the commotion she had caused in the world of fashion, was ideally happy in her new and splendid surroundings, to which she adapted herself as easily as if she had been cradled in a palace. Her high-born playmates almost worshipped her, the greatest personages in France conspired to spoil her with their petting and presents; while she completely captivated the hearts of the Duc de Chartres and Madame de Genlis, the latter of whom thus writes of her in her "Memoirs":

"I was passionately fond of her. This charming child was the most idle I ever knew; she had no memory, she was very wild, which even added to the grace of her figure, as it gave her an air of vivacity. This, joined to her natural indolence, and to a great deal of wit, made her very engaging. Her figure was fine and light; she flew like Atalanta."

Every year seemed to add to Pamela's graces of person and character. At sixteen she was described by one who knew her, as "a creature born to win all hearts. There never was a girl more fascinating. She is beautiful, accomplished, and the possessor of a heart which would make her a treasure to any man who might gain her." The fame of her beauty went through all France—gallants toasted and fought for her; poets raved over her; and France's greatest artists vied with each other for the honour of transmitting her charms to posterity.

It was inevitable that a girl of such peerless loveliness should have lovers by the score; but to one and all she said "no." She preferred her free, joyous life to any matrimonial fetters, however richly gilded. It is said that she might, if she would, have been Duchesse de Montpensier and a royal princess, but the prospect had no allurements for her since her heart could not go with it.

But to Pamela, as to most unyielding beauties, the "Prince Charming" came at last—in the form of Lord Edward Fitz Gerald, younger son of the Duke of Leinster, a strikingly handsome young Irishman, who had won fame by his courage and cleverness as well as for his good looks. It is variously said that Lord Edward first saw the beautiful girl who was to be his wife in the Duc de Chartres' box at the Opera in Paris, and during a short visit she paid to England in 1792. However this may be, the two young people appear to have fallen deeply in love with each other almost from their first meeting, and in the

following December they were married at Tournay, in spite of the opposition of Madame de Genlis.

In the marriage contract preserved at Tournay they are described as "Edward Fitz Gerald, native of London, son of the late Duke of Leinster, aged twenty-nine years, and Stephanie Caroline Anne Simms, known as 'Pamela,' native of London, daughter of William Berkeley and of Mary Simms." The contract is signed by Edward Fitz Gerald, Pamela Simms, Philippe Egalité, and others.

It is thus clear that whatever claim Pamela may have had to a royal origin she was married under the maiden name of the Hampshire widow; while her father's name appears as Berkeley, and not as Seymour, as asserted by Madame de Genlis.

In contradiction to this contract, however, the marriage is thus recorded in *The Masonic Magazine* for January 1794: "The Hon. Lord Edward Fitz Gerald, Knight of the Shire for County Kildare, to Madame Pamela Capet, daughter of His Royal Highness, the ci-devant Duke of Orleans"; while Moore in his "Life of Lord Edward Fitz Gerald," declares that "Pamela was the adopted, or as it may be said, without scruple, the *actual daughter* of Madame de Genlis by the Duc d'Orleans."

Pamela's life with her handsome husband in the modest home in Ireland to which he now took her was for five years one of idyllic happiness. "Life seems to me," she wrote to Madame de Genlis, "more like a beautiful dream than reality. We are so happy that I sometimes ask myself fearfully, will it, can it last?" In his letters to his mother, the Duchess, Lord Edward draws some charming pictures of their beautiful and simple life.



“DEAREST MOTHER,” he writes a few months after the wedding-day, “I have been very idle, and so has my dear little wife. The truth is the sitting up so late has made us late in the morning, and we get on so agreeably and chatter so much in the morning, that the day is over before we know where we are. Dublin has been very gay—a great number of balls of which the lady misses none. Dancing is a great passion with her. I wish you could see her dance, she dances so with her heart and soul. Everybody seems to like her, and behave civilly and kindly to her.”

In the following month he writes this idyllic letter from Black Rock near Dublin. “Wife and I are come to settle here. We came last night, got up to a delightful spring day, and are now enjoying the little book-room, with the windows open, hearing the birds sing, and the place looking beautiful. The plants in the passage are just watered, and, with the passage-door open, the room smells like a green-house. Pamela has dressed four beautiful flower-pots, and is now working at her frame while I write to my dearest mother. I am sitting at the bay window, with all those pleasant feelings which the fine weather, the pretty place, the singing birds, the pretty wife and Frescati give me. My wife is busy in her little American jacket, planting sweet peas and mignonette. Her table and work-box, with the little one’s caps are on the table. . . . The dear little, pale, pretty wife sends her love to you.”

From one home to another in Ireland the devoted young couple drifted, each in turn proving a “little

Paradise," as Lord Edward describes their home in Kildare. "It don't describe well," he writes: "one must see it and feel it. It has, however, all the little things that make beauty to me. My dear wife dotes on it, and becomes it."

But these halcyon days were coming to an end. Such happiness as this proved, as Pamela feared, too great to last. Lord Edward, who was little less devoted to his country than to his wife, was led from the peace of his home life into the troubled arena of politics. He became one of the ruling spirits of the Society of United Irishmen, and was deputed to cross the Channel to arrange for a French invasion of Ireland. The scheme was betrayed, and one March day in 1798 the leaders of the revolutionary party were arrested. Lord Edward contrived to escape and found a hiding-place where for some time he remained in concealment.

Meanwhile Pamela had removed to obscure lodgings in a street at the back of Merrion Square, where she remained in fear and trembling, expecting every hour to hear of the arrest of her beloved husband. Often under the cover of the darkness Lord Edward would steal from his hiding-place to spend a few blissful, if fearful, hours with his wife and their child. One evening, it is said, the servant-girl, peeping through the keyhole, saw the young couple weeping together over the cradle of their sleeping infant. In vain did Pamela entreat her husband not to expose himself to such danger. His stolen visits would inevitably be discovered sooner or later, and the thought was too terrible for her to bear. As a matter of fact his identity

was well known to at least two members of the household. "I know who the gentleman is who comes to see the lady," a man-servant announced one day. "You know!" gasped the owner of the house, who was in the secret. "Yes, I know!" was the answer. "The gentleman put his boots to be cleaned, and there was his name written in one of them. But you needn't think I'll sell him—not for ten times a thousand pounds. I'd lay down my life for him and for her, if need be."

But the day of tragedy could not be delayed for ever. Staunchly loyal as his friends were, the secret of his place of concealment was at last discovered; and one night, after he had returned from one of his visits to his wife, the house in which he was concealed was surrounded by soldiers, and the door of his room burst open. "You are Lord Edward Fitz Gerald," said the commanding officer. "I have a warrant for your arrest, and I call upon you to surrender."

Thus driven to bay the unhappy man, resolved rather to die than surrender, seized his dagger and flung himself on his would-be captors. He fought desperately, madly; but the forces arrayed against him were too strong. He was overwhelmed, flung down and, bleeding from half-a-dozen wounds, was secured. But he had sold his freedom dearly, for several of his assailants were disabled and one, the leader of the party, lay dying in a corner of the room. He was taken to the castle and thence to Newgate; where, when asked by the Lord Lieutenant if he wished to send any message to his wife, he answered, "Nothing, nothing—but, oh! break this to her tenderly."

On hearing the terrible news Pamela was distracted. She would gladly have laid down her life for her gallant husband ; but she could do nothing. She sold all her small personal possessions, even her bridal presents, and with the proceeds tried to bribe his gaolers, but all to no purpose. She begged to be allowed to share his captivity, but her request was peremptorily refused. And the crowning blow fell when she was ordered to leave Ireland immediately—to tear herself from her children and never look again on her husband who, she heard, was dying of his wounds. A few days after her departure Lord Edward drew his last breath and she was left desolate. Before his death he had made his will leaving all he possessed “to my wife Lady Pamela Fitz Gerald, as a mark of esteem, love and confidence in her”; but in the following month a Bill of Attainder deprived her of this, her only means of support.

The news of her husband's death was broken to Pamela, soon after she reached London, by the Duke of Richmond, who gives this account of it. “I went immediately to Harley Street and brought Lady Edward to Whitehall, trying to prepare her in the coach for bad news, which I repeatedly said I dreaded, by the next post. She, however, did not take my meaning. When she got to Whitehall, we had Dr Moseley present, and, by degrees, we broke to her the sad event. Her agonies of grief were very great and violent hysterics soon came on. But by degrees she grew more calm at times ; and although she had had little sleep and still less food, and has nervous spasms, yet I hope and trust her health is not materially affected.”

For a time the disconsolate widow was the guest of the Duke of Richmond at Goodwood, where, surrounded by kindness and sympathy, she gradually regained health and something at least of her old brightness; and in 1799 she made her home in Hamburg, where she found comfort in the companionship of an old playfellow, Madame de Genlis' niece, who had married a wealthy banker in that city. Here in later years she made the acquaintance of a gentleman named Pitcairn, to whose persistent suit she yielded, urged no doubt more by her lonely and destitute condition than by affection for him. But the union proved unhappy, and in 1820 we find her living in obscurity and poverty at Toulouse.

Eleven years later the end came to her romantic and tragic life in Paris. The attainder on her husband had been removed and the last few years of her life were spent in material comfort. Madame Ducrest, a niece of Madame de Genlis, who attended Pamela during the closing days of her life, draws a pathetic picture of her changed appearance and of the courage with which she faced the end.

“Not many days before her last illness and death,” she writes, “Lady Edward Fitz Gerald was still admired and sought after; brilliant in society, *spirituelle* and remarkable for liveliness of fancy and playfulness of imagination. . . . In the *salon* of the Comtesse de Balbi, Pamela was the life and soul of the society. So many graces and powers of fascination, such goodness and amiability, were soon to be but a remembrance to perhaps the only woman who was her friend. Here we had before us, at one moment, Lady Fitz Gerald, full

of talents and endearing qualities, beautiful as an angel, and soon after she lay before our eyes a corpse! . . . Her name will ever be gratefully remembered in the cottages of the poor in the vicinity of her place of residence. People of fashion will remember, perhaps, the fascination of the beautiful Lady Edward Fitz Gerald; the poor will never forget the kind and generous acts of Pamela.”

Thus at the age of fifty-seven, thirty-three years after the tragedy which clouded her life at its brightest, died Pamela, retaining to the last, in spite of all her troubles, the graces and fascination which had made her the idol of all who knew her. What her true parentage was remains still as inscrutable as when she romped, a sunny, golden-haired child, in the Palais Royal nursery. All we really know, or need care to know, is that she was, as stated on her tombstone in the Cemetery of Montmartre, Pamela, one of the most bewitching and lovable women who ever won man's homage or were the playthings of destiny.

## A LOW-BORN PRINCESS OF THE BLOOD

THERE was scarcely a "buck" of all who strutted and swaggered along Pall Mall in the early thirties of the eighteenth century who could pass the shop of Mr Rennie, without a flutter of the heart and a bold glance through the tailor's window in the hope of catching a glimpse of Mary Clement, his lovely apprentice, whose beauty was the nightly toast at many a neighbouring tavern and to vindicate whose superior charms to those of the rest of her sex swords had been drawn and not a little blood spilt. And the "blood" who could boast that he had won a look, much more a smile, from her was the envy of his fellows.

And well he might be ; for there were no more bewitching eyes and no more intoxicating smile in all London town, when George II. was King, than those of Mary Clement, the low-born sempstress, whose loveliness was rivalled by her modesty, and who could seldom be induced to look up from her stitching to reward the boldness of her admirers. "When Nature modelled Mistress Mary Clement," wrote an enthusiastic chronicler of the time, "she was in her most inspired and bountiful mood. Such eyes of ravishing blue, such hair of fine-spun gold, a complexion of such dazzling fairness, a head so daintily poised, a figure so sylphlike and so

instinct with grace, London does not see once in a century."

Such a rare and radiant prize as this was not to be won lightly; and Mary, conscious of her exceptional charms, turned a cold and dainty shoulder to every wooer, however high above her in station—to all but one, that is, the handsomest of them all, if the least bold. The apartments above the tailor's shop were occupied by young Edward Walpole, second son of the great Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister of England; and he it was who, before she knew her danger, had stolen Mary's heart away. Walpole, who had just returned from the "grand tour," was one of the handsomest young men of his day in England, and with his physical attractions he combined talents of a remarkable order and the social charm of a born courtier. He had, in fact, all the equipment, social and personal, to win the hand of the proudest beauty in the land; but Cupid had other designs for him.

As he passed daily by the shop door on his way to and from his apartments, his notice was frequently attracted by the vision of the lovely, golden-haired girl industriously plying her needle or cutting out patterns of small clothes; and a mutual magnetism drew the maid's eyes to the handsome young gentleman, to whose coming she began, in spite of herself, to look forward with a delightful anticipation. These stolen glances were succeeded by equally surreptitious smiles and words of greeting when Rennie's back was turned. Secret meetings followed, and before the young people realised the path they were treading, they



were hopelessly and deliciously in love with each other.

When Madame Rennie realised the state of things, she was furious. "The impudent young hussy!" she said in her anger, "to allow a gentleman so much above her to make love to her,—and so slyly too! No good can come of such carryings on!" And she read the blushing and confused sempstress a severe lecture on her lapse from maidenly modesty. More than that, she bade the girl begone before she brought disgrace on a respectable household such as hers.

Mary was heartbroken. She dared not return home in disgrace. She had no friend to whom to appeal in her trouble—except one. Yes, there was one who, she knew, would help her. And with tears streaming from her eyes she rushed upstairs to pour out her troubles in her lover's ears. "Never mind, my darling!" he exclaimed, as he took the sobbing girl in his arms and kissed the tears away, "nothing and no one can harm you while I am near. You shall be my wife—in all but name—and in our happiness all your troubles will soon be forgotten." In the words of the biographer of the Walpoles: "she vowed that she would never leave him; and she kept her word."

Thus dramatically, for good or ill, were linked the lives of the poor sempstress and the son of England's greatest statesman, Mary never dreaming, and little caring in her happiness, that the daughter of this union would one day be within the charmed circle of the throne itself, a princess of the blood royal and mother of a son who might have lived to wear a crown as England's King.

But those days were still distant; and meanwhile Mary was ideally happy with her handsome and high-born lover, whose devotion exceeded even his vows in her hour of trouble and threatened disgrace.

Mary Clement became the mother of five children by Edward Walpole—two sons and three daughters—who inherited the good looks of their parents and of whom the daughters were destined to rise far above the lowly state of their mother. After the birth of her fifth child Mary died, at the early age of twenty-four, deeply mourned by the “husband” whose dream of happiness had been cut so tragically short. In later years he did full justice to his exceptional talents, for he was made a Knight of the Bath, a Privy Councillor and Chief-Secretary of Ireland. He might, if he would, have found a wife in the most exalted circles: but he preferred to remain loyal to the memory of his lost love, the sempstress, and to live for her children, the legacy of their too brief union.

The three daughters—Laura, Mary and Charlotte—grew through beautiful childhood into a girlhood of surpassing loveliness. “Nowhere in England or out of it,” says a chronicler, “could be found three sisters at once so beautiful and so richly dowered with intelligence, amiability and wit. As the ‘lovely Miss Walpoles’ they created as great a sensation as even the beautiful Miss Gunnings; they were fêted and petted by Society; each had her retinue of high-placed wooers, eager to lay coronets and riches at her dainty feet; and when they took their walks abroad they were followed

by crowds of curious admirers anxious to catch a glimpse of them, and maybe, to win a smile from their pretty lips."

Their uncle, Horace Walpole, was very proud of his beautiful nieces, and loved to entertain them at Strawberry Hill, to romp with them as children, and to surround them with courtly attentions in the flower of their exquisite girlhood. But, in spite of their charms, and of the fact that they were the granddaughters of the Prime Minister, the doors of the Court were closed against them by their "birth's ignoble bar." But this exclusion mattered little to the high-spirited girls, who valued more the universal homage to their beauty than all the favours royalty could shower on them.

Besieged by lovers—many of them highly eligible—it was not likely that the three beauties could long maintain their maiden condition. Laura, the eldest, was the first to capitulate—to a brother of the Earl of Albemarle, a clergyman whose gifts and family influence raised him in later years to a bishopric. Of this match, her uncle, Horace, wrote, "I have forgot to tell you of a wedding in our family; my brother's eldest daughter is to be married to-morrow to Lord Albemarle's brother, a Canon of Windsor. We are very happy with the match. The bride is very agreeable, sensible and good, though not so handsome, perhaps, as her sisters. . . . The second, Marie, is beauty itself. Her face, bloom, eyes, teeth and person are all perfect. You may imagine how charming she is when I tell you that her only fault, if one must find one, is that her face is rather too round. She has a great deal of wit and vivacity, with perfect modesty."

A few years later, Charlotte, the youngest of the "three Graces," found a husband in Lord Huntingtower, afterwards fourth Earl of Dysart, of whose wooing Horace Walpole gives an interesting account. "My brother's last daughter, Charlotte, is married; and though their story is too short for a romance, it will make a pretty novel; nay, it is almost brief enough for a play, coming very nearly within the space of twenty-four hours. The young lord has liked her for some time; on Saturday sen'night he came to my brother and made his demand. Edward said, in answer, he would never force the inclinations of his children,—he did not believe his daughter, Charlotte, had any attachment; but she might have; he would send for her and know her mind.

"She was with her sister Marie, to whom she said very sensibly, 'If I were but nineteen, I would refuse point-blank, for I don't like to be married in a week to a man I never saw. But I am two-and-twenty; some people say I am handsome, but I believe the truth is that I am likely to be at large and to go off soon. It is dangerous to refuse so great a match.' Take notice of the words 'married in a week.' The love that was so many months in ripening could not stay above a week. She came and saw the impetuous lover, and I believe she was glad that she had not 'refused point-blank,' for they were married last Thursday."

Of the three daughters of the sempstress we have thus seen the eldest married to the brother of an earl, and a spiritual peer of future years: and the youngest assured of the coronet of a countess. But exalted at these unions were, they were to be

far eclipsed by the second and most beautiful daughter, Mary, who was destined to mingle the blood of the low-born mother with the royal strain of the House of Hanover.

So many and so exalted were Mary's suitors that she had but to pick and choose among the coronets that were at her disposal. But Mary was in no haste to wed, and refused many a tempting offer before at last she deigned to give her hand to one of the oldest and least physically attractive of all her lovers. The fortunate man was none other than James, Earl of Waldegrave, Knight of the Garter, Privy Councillor and Governor to the Prince of Wales,—a man old enough to be her father, but with substantial claims on her preference which none of his younger and more handsome rivals possessed. And thus it came to pass that one day in 1759, Mary Walpole left the altar Countess Waldegrave, bride of one of the most talented and distinguished of England's nobles.

Her dream of happiness, however, was short-lived; for, four years after her nuptials, and just after the birth of her last child, the Earl was struck down by smallpox, and in spite of the tender ministrations of his wife, who nursed him with a touching devotion and a heroic disregard of her own danger, succumbed to the malady.

The Countess was disconsolate, and it was long before she emerged from her grief and retirement to dazzle the world again by her beauty—now greater than ever in its matured perfection. Once more her hand was sought in marriage by the most eligible men in the land; but to one and all she said “no,” even to the Duke of Portland, who

tempted her long with a coronet of strawberry-leaves. She had already realised her childish ambition, of which the following pretty story is told. One day, when she was a child in short petticoats, she startled her father by saying, "Some day I mean to be a grand lady." "Rubbish, child," was the father's answer, "that is impossible; for you are only a beggar and it is just as well that you should know it." "Then," retorted the mite, with a saucy toss of her pretty little head, "I'll be a *lady* beggar." She was now a "grand lady" and her social ambition was satisfied. She preferred to be content with her laurels, and to live for her three little girls.

But fate had other designs for the sempstress's daughter. It was not long before the most fascinating widow in England had a royal lover at her feet,—none other than William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the favourite brother of the King, George III. The Duke was a boy of nineteen when he fell under the spell of this lovely mother of three children; but from the first glimpse of her he was undone. He loved her with all the hot, unreasoning passion of a boy, and he would brook no refusal to his pleading. In vain the Countess protested that he was too young to wed, and she too old to be his wife, and dwelt on the great disparity in their positions. The young prince refused to listen to her protests. "I love you more than life itself," he vowed. "I shall never marry another. For your sake I would gladly resign the crown itself."

What could the Countess do, in face of such ardour and inflexible resolve, but consent; and one

December day she became the wife of the King's brother in her house in Pall Mall, not many doors from the tailor's shop in which her mother, less than thirty years earlier, had stitched small clothes as a tailor's apprentice. "A singular union indeed," as Mr Eliot Warburton remarks, "of the two extreme links of the social chain took place when H.R.H. William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, espoused the daughter of the unfortunate Mary Clement—a marriage, in virtue of which it was not only possible, but quite probable that a descendant of the tailor's apprentice might in course of time take his or her seat upon that very Throne to which her own daughters had been denied all approach."

Although the marriage was kept a profound secret, the Duke's marked devotion to the fair Countess was such as to attract universal attention to their relations. When it was observed that not only was he almost inseparable from her, but that her servants wore a semi-royal uniform and that gentlemen of his household escorted her to her carriage with the deference due to a princess, one can scarcely wonder that tongues wagged maliciously or that the Countess's reputation suffered. And when Lady Waldegrave accompanied the Duke on a tour of the Continent any lingering doubt as to the intimacy of their relations was removed, whatever suspicion might remain of their legitimacy.

There is little doubt that the prince was as anxious to proclaim his marriage as his wife was to make her position clear and to claim the privileges of her new rank; but the time was not

propitious for breaking his secret to the King. George had already been roused to a frenzy of anger on learning that his brother, the Duke of Cumberland, had made a wife of Mrs Horton, the pretty widow of a Derbyshire squire. "You fool! you blockhead! you villain!" he had exclaimed to the Duke when he was daring enough to approach his offended Majesty. "I tell you that woman shall never be a Royal Duchess—she shall never be anything." "What shall I do, then?" inquired the crestfallen culprit. "Go away—go abroad till I can determine what to do," thundered George; and the Duke had to return to Calais to tell his wife the humiliating result of the interview.

If the *mésalliance* of Henry Frederick, who was the *roué* of his family, raised such a storm in his royal brother's breast, what could be expected when the King learned that the brother to whom he was so devoted, the Duke of Gloucester, had been guilty of a similar offence? The Duke was in despair; for not only was the Royal Marriage Act, which was to make such unions as his illegal, about to become law, but his wife was expecting shortly to become a mother, and it was thus of the highest importance that the King's sanction of the match should be obtained at once.

In his extremity he wrote to the King announcing the fact of his marriage to Lady Waldegrave, and begging him to send officers of state to attend his wife's accouchement, thus recognising her rank as a princess of the blood. On reading this letter George was furious. He poured forth torrents of abuse on his absent brother, and spoke of the marriage as a "highly disgraceful step"; and



when at last his anger had cooled, he lay awake all night weeping. To Lord North he said, a few days later, "I admit that on the subject of the Duke my heart is sorely wounded; for I have ever loved him with the fondness one bears for a child."

To this appeal George sent no answer; and it was only when William Henry, as a last resource, threatened to appeal to the House of Lords that he sent the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor and other high officials to wait upon the Duke and Duchess, and to report to him on the legality of the marriage. Among the most important evidence submitted to this Committee of Inquiry was that of the Bishop of Exeter, who testified that "when a marriage-bill was brought in he had thought it right to question Lady Waldegrave, then on a visit at his Deanery." "I went into her room," he added, "and telling her my reasons for inquiring I asked, whether she was married. She burst into a flood of tears and cried, 'I am! I am married!' and then, falling into a great agony, she wrung her hands and exclaimed, 'Good God, what have I done? I have betrayed the Duke, and broken my promise to him!'"

The result of the inquiry was that the Committee was satisfied that a marriage had actually taken place between the Duke and the Countess; but in its report to the King it omitted to describe the union as legal. This omission drove the Duke to the last extremity of despair; his child might be born any hour, and, at any cost, its legitimacy must be placed beyond all question. Rushing off to the

Archbishop's palace he found his Grace, with the Bishop of London, on the point of retiring for the night; but, late as the hour was, he insisted that they should go at once to the King and tell him that if he had any doubts as to the legality of the marriage he, the Duke, would remove them. "But it is impossible," protested the Archbishop, "we cannot go at this late hour." "You shall not lay your heads on the pillows until you have seen his Majesty," was the obdurate answer; and to the palace the two dignitaries had perforce to go.

The King refused to listen to them, and vowed that unless his brother were remarried he would have nothing to say to the match. The Duke refused point-blank to go through the ceremony again, and finally George yielded a reluctant recognition of the marriage—only just in time, for within a few hours the Duchess gave birth to a son.

With the King reconciled and appeased the rest was plain sailing. The Duke and Duchess were becomingly submissive and spared no effort to win his Majesty's favour. But, as Horace Walpole wrote at the time of his niece, "Her ambition, which is her prevailing passion, will not long be smothered." Nor was it. Secure now of the King's favour, recognised as a royal princess, the daughter of Mary Clement had reached the loftiest summit of her desires. She had raised herself to the most dazzling social pinnacle, and from the steps of the throne she could hold her head proudly in the face of the world. None could afford now to speak slightly of her or of her lowly origin; she was sister-in-law of the King of England, and the world should know it.

And the world, ever fickle, was quick to fawn on her. While the Duchess of Cumberland was left severely alone to enjoy her clouded splendour, the Duchess of Gloucester's *levées* were thronged by all the greatest in the land, anxious to pay homage to and win the smiles of the new princess, the favourite of the King and Queen. And thus for a few brilliant years Mary Walpole shone as a bright star in the royal firmament, drinking deep of the intoxicating cup of pleasure and of power.

But her life was not destined to close in such splendour. The Duke, after a few years of devotion to his beautiful wife, began to look elsewhere for distraction, and fell a victim to the charms of Lady Almeria Carpenter, one of the loveliest women of the time. In vain the Duchess Mary tried all her arts to win the truant back to her side; the new infatuation held him in thrall and he could not even simulate an ardour for the love of his boyhood. Other princesses might and no doubt would have overlooked such infidelity—but not so the Duchess of Gloucester. When she fully realised that her husband's heart was lost to her, she refused to share his home any longer. She insisted on and obtained a legal separation; and the days of her magnificence were over.

The remaining years of her life were passed in retirement and in works of unostentatious charity; and when she died on 23rd August 1807, two years after her ducal husband's death, it was not, as Mr Willmott Dixon says, "the grand State funeral awarded her that was the truest tribute to her worth, but the tears of the women and children whose homes she had brightened and whose sorrows

she had relieved, who lined the long unlovely Brompton Road as their beloved benefactress was borne to her last resting-place in the Chapel of St George at Windsor."

None more deeply and truly mourned the Duchess than her five children, of whom the three daughters by her first marriage became respectively Countess Waldegrave, Duchess of Grafton and Lady Hugh Seymour. To the Duke she bore two children—a son, Prince William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester, who married his cousin, Princess Mary, daughter of George III., and a daughter, the Princess Sophia, who died unmarried in 1844. Had she but lived to middle age Mary Clement, the sempstress, might have thus nursed as her own grandchildren a royal prince and princess who addressed the King of England as "Uncle."

## MADAME "LE CHEVALIER"

AT one time the valiant soldier, striking terror into the hearts of the enemy by the sweep and thrust of his death-dealing sword, at another a charming demoiselle of pouts and dimples, setting men's hearts in a flutter by an intoxicating smile or the glimpse of a dainty ankle; now, the grave and sedate ambassador skilled in all the arts of diplomacy, and again, by some subtle metamorphosis, a gracious lady of society, wakening envy by the blaze of her diamonds and the grace of her deportment—such was the Chevalier D'Eon, the wonder and puzzle of the eighteenth century, who changed his (or her) sex as easily as a woman changes her gown, and played each *rôle* so perfectly that, while to-day none could suspect that he was not a man, to-morrow none could doubt that "he" was a woman and one of the most feminine and charming of the sex.

What was the solution of this mystery, the most inscrutable that ever baffled human curiosity? For more than half-a-century it was the puzzle of Europe. It was hotly discussed in royal courts, in the boudoirs of great ladies and in taverns and coffee-houses. Enormous sums were wagered on it; duels were fought over it; it estranged lifelong friends, and brought discord into peaceful homes. And through all the decades of perplexity the Chevalier carried a smiling and imperturbable face,

posing as a male or female just as his mood or expediency suggested, and sublimely indifferent to the wonder and mystery he excited wherever he went.

It was one October day in 1728 that this human enigma first appeared on the stage on which he was to play his dual *rôle*. His birthplace was the picturesque little town of Tonnerre, which clings to the slopes overlooking the Armançon, a tributary of the Yonne, in its environment of rich vine-lands. His family belonged to the *petite noblesse*; for centuries his ancestors had been brave soldiers and astute men of law; and his father was a Parisian *avocat* who held many offices of trust and profit.

One thing is abundantly certain. The infant was, at his coming, hailed as a boy; for when he was carried to his baptism up the steep flight of two hundred steps which lead to the Church of Notre Dame, the Dean of Tonnerre gave him the names Charles Genéviève Louis Auguste André Timothée, and wrote him down in the baptismal register as "the *son* of Louis D'Eon de Beaumont and of Dame Françoise, his wife."

For the first four years of his eventful life this Charles of many names was undoubtedly a boy—and a lusty boy, too; and his first assumption of the female *rôle* came when, a child of four, dressed in the robe of the sisterhood of the Virgin, he was publicly and solemnly consecrated to the Virgin in front of the high altar of Notre Dame. For three years, until the age of seven, he was a *Fille de la Vierge*, a fair-haired, dainty, winsome maiden, much petted by the ladies of Tonnerre.

At seven he reverted to breeches—or probably

put them on for the first time—and as a boy was taken in hand by a local *curé*, Abbé Marcenay, whose only recollection of him in later years was that he was a veritable imp of mischief, whose lessons were punctuated and enforced by frequent whippings. When his tutor could do no more with him, Charles Genéviève was sent to Paris to the school of a M. Tavernier, where he was boy enough to bathe in the Seine with his fellow-pupils, to "punch their heads," on small provocation, and to beat them all both at games and lessons. There was no doubt of his sex at this time; or during his four years at the College Mazarin, where he proved himself the best scholar, fencer and athlete of his day, although at his confirmation he had added "Marie" to his other six Christian names.

In fact, many years were to pass before he resumed the sex he discarded in childhood, and during this period he graduated as Doctor of Civil and Common Law and became a fully fledged barrister. These days in Paris seem to have been gay and happy. He was *bon camarade* in many a merry drinking-bout, but it was observed that the bright eyes of the *filles de l'opera* had no fascination for him. The sex failed to attract him even in the lusty days of his young manhood. On the other hand he found his chief recreation in manly sports, notably fencing, at which, in spite of his short stature and girlish figure, he was more than a match for any of his fellows. Indeed he was one of the most skilful fencers in France, if not in Europe.

Such was D'Eon in the early twenties—a man among men and more manly than most; although,

when he went to see his father on his death-bed, in 1749, the lawyer's farewell words were, "Do not be uneasy, my *daughter*; it is quite as natural to die as to live. I have been at much pains to teach you how to live, and I must likewise teach you how to die."

After a spell of authorship, during which D'Eon was appointed to the responsible office of literary censor, he was introduced to the Prince de Conti, the chief of Louis XV.'s secret agents, who was at once struck by his feminine appearance and saw to what useful account he could turn it in the service of his Majesty. Although D'Eon was twenty-six at this time he had the face and figure of a girl—and a very charming girl too—of eighteen. In the guise of a *demoiselle* and with the clever, trained brain of a man of mature years, D'Eon might be of invaluable assistance as a secret agent at foreign courts, where his assumed sex would procure for him access and consideration which would be denied to a man.

The opportunity was not long in coming. Louis was anxious to establish friendly and intimate relations with Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, with the object of foiling the ambitious designs of Frederick the Great; and what more ideal ambassador could he have than this young lawyer with the girl's face, who would have no difficulty in gaining access to the Empress and by his subtle tongue in winning her consent to correspond secretly with the French Sovereign in a cypher which he would explain to her? Louis was delighted, and so, naturally, was D'Eon, who was flattered at being asked to play so important a part in the affairs of Europe as that of allying two great nations.



And thus it came to pass that, with the Chevalier Douglas for escort,—a Scottish adventurer who had fled from his native land to save his neck from the hangman,—a beautiful young lady set out one day on the long journey from Paris to St Petersburg, charged with a delicate mission of international importance. "Small in stature, slightly and gracefully built, with a pink and white complexion, large melting blue eyes, ruddy pouting lips, and an expression of singular sweetness, Mademoiselle was equipped with every natural advantage to win not only the smiles of the Russian Empress, but the homage of every man with a heart susceptible to female charms." Winsome as the young lady was she was also a student; for she carried with her an innocent-looking copy of Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois," in the double boards of whose binding was concealed an autograph letter from Louis to Elizabeth and also a secret cypher for correspondence with the French King.

The Russian Empress was charmed by this fair ambassadress with her "milk and roses" and her pretty ways; and metaphorically, if not literally, took her to her Imperial heart. And when Mademoiselle Lia, as D'Eon called himself, confessed with charming blushes and confusion the little deception he had practised on his august friend, Elizabeth, so far from taking offence, loaded him with still greater favours, for the Empress was notoriously susceptible to masculine charms. It is said that she appointed the fraudulent "Mademoiselle" to the office of lady-reader, in whose company she spent hours daily, while "Mademoiselle" was allowed to share the apartments of the youthful Countess

Catherine Woronzoff, niece of the Vice-Chancellor. This privileged intimacy with the Empress and Countess, not unnaturally perhaps, gave rise to a multitude of anecdotes which afforded much food for scandal in the Courts of Europe. To such good purpose did D'Eon turn his opportunities and his persuasive tongue that he induced his royal mistress to consent to an alliance with France and Austria which resulted in the Seven Years' War. While, as a signal mark of her affection, Elizabeth entrusted her reading-lady with the distinguished duty, usually assigned to an ambassador, of conveying the treaty of alliance to the French King.

In corroboration of this story (which, it is only fair to say, is held by some writers to be largely legend) there is to be seen a portrait of D'Eon painted about this time, which represents him as a young lady of considerable charms, and displaying an ample bosom. If this portrait is, as we have no reason to doubt, a faithful presentment, it furnishes more convincing evidence than a whole library of books of the impossibility of suspecting that so perfect a woman could be a man.

In the following year D'Eon returned to Russia—this time as Secretary of Legation, and in his masculine character. "Naturally gay, of engaging manners and considerable wit, fond alike of a glass and a joke, a skilful horseman and swordsman, he was sought after and entertained by many great personages. With the men, all of them hard drinkers and superb fencers, he was a hail-well-met companion; while to the women he proved somewhat of an enigma. He was polite and *empresé* towards them, but matters never went further; and

the circumstance of his chaste life in a notoriously dissolute Court, coupled with his effeminate face, not unlikely gave rise to the rumour : " The young French Secretary is a girl."

By this time the question of D'Eon's sex had become the talk and speculation of Europe. Great ladies gossiped and giggled over the problem behind their fans ; men debated it hotly over their glasses, some declaring that he was a man, others jeering at such an insane suggestion. On his return to France he was the hero of the hour, followed by curious crowds wherever he went. The ladies especially petted and fussed over him, invited him to their boudoirs and lavished their smiles on him. More than one asked him point-blank whether he was man or woman ; but all such outspoken curiosity he evaded with the skill of an adroit verbal fencer.

But D'Eon soon wearied of beauty's smiles and boudoir flatteries. He was surfeited with sweets, and determined to prove that if he was a woman he could at least do man's work as well as any man in France. He sought and obtained permission to join the army, then engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the combined forces of England, Prussia and Hanover ; and for many months we find him fighting with the best, and performing prodigies of valour against his country's enemies, as captain of dragoons, much to the mystification of those who were assured that he was a woman. Once, at the head of his troop, he charged a Prussian battalion with such dash and determination that it was thoroughly routed and every man was taken prisoner.

When D'Eon returned to Paris covered with

glory he was not long allowed to rest on his laurels. The Duke de Nivernais was about to start for England on a mission of peace, and the young captain of dragoons was despatched as his secretary, thus making his first appearance in England, where he was to spend so many years of his adventurous life. His fame had gone before him, and he was received not only at Court but everywhere with a cordiality out of all proportion to his rank. The great ladies of the Court vied with each other in doing him honour; he basked in smiles, and was surfeited with delicate attentions, while none smiled on him more sweetly than George III.'s Queen, Sophie Charlotte, who frequently received him in private audience and spent long hours in his entertaining company. No wonder that envious tongues wagged busily, or that the mystery of the Chevalier's sex became the chief topic of conversation from one end of England to the other.

Many a beautiful and high-born lady made overtures to him at her country seat, at which he was an honoured guest, but, as Telfer says, "upon all such occasions he immediately left the house,"—a Joseph-like attitude which confirmed the suspicion that he was a woman and thus unable to respond to such tempting advances. Another fact which strengthened the conviction was that, in an age of lax morality, the Chevalier, as he had now become, was conspicuous by the chastity of his life, although it was observed that he took a full share in the very free conversation of the dinner table after the ladies and the chaplain had retired.

The Count du Châtelet, the French Ambassador

of the time, openly proclaimed his positive conviction that D'Eon was a female, and the same opinion was scattered broadcast in many a scurrilous pamphlet. It was an age of almost universal gambling: and heavy wagers were made on the subject, some speculators even issuing gambling policies "on the sex of Monsieur le Chevalier D'Eon." At one time outstanding bets reached the enormous total of £70,000; and one of the almost countless wagers actually became the subject of a law-suit, in which one witness after another swore that D'Eon was a woman, apparently on no stronger grounds than that he so successfully assumed the *rôle* of female. In this action Lord Mansfield gave judgment for £700 against the defendant, who had wagered that he was a man.

Some even maintained that he was not only a woman but a bearded one to boot; and a description of him at this time bears out the latter part of the indictment, for he is pictured as having a "rather effeminate countenance, blue eyes, small features, and a pale complexion, *with a dark beard.*" We also learn that "he wore a wig and queue, that he invariably appeared in the uniform of an officer of dragoons—red, with pea-green lapels—that he was about five feet seven inches in height, and of a somewhat stoutish build."

D'Eon professed to be highly indignant at these indecent speculations as to his sex. It is said that he even administered a severe thrashing to two or three of the insurance-speculators and threatened several others; and he finally disappeared from London for a time—where, not even his most intimate friends seemed to know. His mysterious

flight added fuel to the speculations, and on his return the flames broke out more fiercely still. The ladies, as is perhaps intelligible, seem to have been more curious than the men, and many exerted all their wiles in a vain effort to wheedle his secret from him. One young girl, Miss Wilkes by name, went so far as to send him the following note in French :—

“ Miss Wilkes presents her compliments to Monsieur le Chevalier D'Eon, and is anxious to know if he really be a woman, as everybody asserts, or a man. It would be very kind of Monsieur le Chevalier D'Eon to communicate the truth to Miss Wilkes who begs him, with all her heart, to do so.” But even to such pretty, if slightly impertinent, pleading D'Eon turned a deaf ear.

But to return—for these speculations as to his sex covered many years, even to the close of his long life—the Chevalier's stay in England was by no means a bed of roses. After he had taken back to France ratifications of the treaty of peace and had been dubbed by the King a Knight of the Royal Military Order of St Louis, he returned to England as temporary ambassador. But there were many enemies who were already plotting his downfall—men whose secrets he was accused of revealing—and when one of them, the Count de Guerchy, was appointed permanent ambassador in his stead at the English Court, D'Eon's troubles began.

De Guerchy was only one of a number of powerful French nobles who had arrayed themselves against the King, and they determined to give him a taste of their power by smashing up his secret

agency, of which D'Eon was now the most conspicuous and dangerous member. When Louis heard of these designs he sent a warning message to the Chevalier, bidding him resume his woman's clothes and hide himself in the city, as he was no longer safe in his London home. But D'Eon was not so easily frightened. A stout heart beat under his supposedly feminine breast, and he defied his enemies to do their worst, a challenge they lost no time in taking up. He fortified his house, gathered a number of loyal friends around him, and prepared for the worst.

To quote Mr Christy's D'Eon manuscripts, "He kept a lamp burning throughout the night, and had a red-hot poker by his side night and day. His arsenal included four brace of pistols, two guns and light sabres. The garrison consisted of several dragoons of his old regiment, and some deserters whom he picked up in London, and who occupied the basement of the house, with orders to admit the French police officers, should they at any time seek to enter, and then cut off their retreat, whilst he himself defended the entrenchment. It was arranged that in the event of his being worsted, he should make a preconcerted signal to his men to intimate that they were to run for their lives, while he fired the mines which he had placed under the principal rooms and the staircase." On the rare occasions when he ventured from his fortress D'Eon walked abroad armed to the teeth, and threatening that if any people attempted to lay hands on him, he would either shoot them dead, or shoot himself. "And," wrote Walpole, "I believe him quite capable of carrying out his threat."

Alarmed by such a resolute front, Guerchy, who had also been warned by the British Government that "according to the law of this kingdom, it would be impossible to justify the seizure either of the person or papers of the Chevalier D'Eon," abandoned the attempt to kidnap him and smuggle him over to France, and decided to try guile. Under the pretence of a friendly overture he invited the Chevalier to a supper of reconciliation, an invitation which was accepted. D'Eon's suspicion of his enemy's motives was, however, by no means disarmed, and it was well that he kept his eyes wide open, for while he was engaged in conversation with the ambassador, de Guerchy's equerry took the opportunity to put poison in his wine, a performance which D'Eon watched out of the corner of his eye. The Chevalier affected innocence, but left the wine untasted; and a few days later the French ambassador found himself dragged before the tribunals of London, on a charge of attempted poisoning. The equerry confessed his crime, but de Guerchy, sheltering himself behind his rank of ambassador, refused to be tried by a judge and jury; the whole disgraceful business was hushed up, and the arch-criminal escaped to France.

This was but one of many attempts to remove the Chevalier D'Eon from his enemies' path. On one occasion, while returning home late at night, he was set on by a gang of hired ruffians, but he wielded his sword with such skill and vigour that he laid low three of his assailants, and the rest took to their heels. Several attempts were also made to induce him to return to France, the Duc de



Choiseul, one of his bitterest enemies, writing most amiable letters to "my dear D'Eon," with this object; but the Chevalier was much too old a bird to be caught thus easily, and baffled all the schemes to entrap and to do away with him.

The principal object of these attempts was to recover certain papers in D'Eon's custody containing details of a plan for the invasion of England arranged by the orders of Louis XV. himself within two months of the signing of the Treaty of Paris, papers which the King's enemies were prepared to go to any extremes to possess. It speaks well for D'Eon's sense of loyalty and honour that he was not only ready to sacrifice his life in defence of these incriminating documents, but, although he was in dire financial straits, he indignantly declined an offer of £20,000 for them, by the leaders of the English Opposition. So gratified was Louis by such evidences of loyalty that he bestowed on him a yearly pension of 12,000 livres, a mark of royal recognition which was as grateful to the Chevalier as it was financially welcome.

After the death of Louis XV. D'Eon again fell on evil days, and it became necessary to make terms with his successor; and it was during his negotiations for this purpose, with M. Beaumarchais, that the Chevalier made the fatal mistake of confessing that he was a woman, a blunder which compelled him to assume that sex for the remainder of his life. A similar confession he seems to have made also to M. Gudin, who accompanied Beaumarchais to London, and who relates that "he met that interesting woman, M'lle D'Eon, at a dinner given by Lord Mayor Wilkes, when,

bursting into tears, she owned to me that she was a female, and showed me her legs covered with the scars of wounds, which she had received when, her horse having been shot dead under her, a squadron of cavalry passed over her body, and she was left lying on the field, supposed to be dead."

This confession led to serious results for D'Eon, for it prevented him from insisting on his claim to be reinstated as French Minister Plenipotentiary in London, and caused the French Government to insist on his assuming the garments of his admitted sex. So far did D'Eon carry his folly, that on the margin of the covenant between himself and Beaumarchais, arranging a continuance of his pension of 12,000 livres, he himself wrote, "the said Demoiselle D'Eon has been proved by witnesses, physicians, surgeons, midwives and legal documents." She (for as a woman D'Eon must now be considered) further covenanted to "wear in future female attire," which she had already worn, she asserted, "upon several occasions known to his Majesty." The die was now cast. D'Eon by his own act had brought his career as a man to an end; and the Doctor of Laws, Chevalier, gallant soldier and astute diplomat, must henceforth be known to the world as a woman. In spite, however, of this formal admission of sex, D'Eon still continued to masquerade as a man, although she refused an offer of 8000 louis d'or if she would submit herself to a jury, authorised to pronounce upon her sex. On this news leaking out, the wagering of the public became more heated than ever. As Telfer says, "upwards of £120,000 had been underwritten in the City. Some of the claims were

very large ; that of a certain M. Panchaud of Paris is said to have amounted to £75,000. In an action brought by a surgeon named Hayes against an underwriter, a Dr Le Goux swore that 'of his certain knowledge, D'Eon was a woman, as he had attended her in sickness.'"

The fear of losing her pension by her continued refusal to accept the condition of wearing female attire at last determined D'Eon to yield, and on 6th August 1777 she first appeared in London "dressed in an elegant sack with a head-dress adorned with diamonds." On the following day she entertained a number of friends at dinner in Brewer Street, one of whom, then a child, recalled her in later years, as "a lusty dame, without the least beard, dressed in black silk with a head-dress in rose toupet and lace cap, a diamond necklace, long stays and an old-fashioned stomacher."

A few days after this banquet, D'Eon was back again on her native soil, from which she had so long been an exile—and with the quaint perversity of her new sex she arrived in France in her red and green uniform of captain of dragoons, and with the cross of St Louis glittering on her breast. The authorities, indignant at such a breach of faith, insisted that D'Eon must at once put on the attire of her sex, but she pleaded that she had no adequate wardrobe. Marie Antoinette came to her assistance and instructed Mademoiselle Bertin, the Court milliner, to prepare an outfit such as "would have sufficed for any four girls of the royal house of St Cyr." In referring to this warrant, D'Eon wrote a few days later, "I could not appear at Versailles in the few articles of female clothing

that remained to me. I needed new ones, and M'lle Bertin undertakes not only to have them made for me but also to turn me into a passably modest and obedient woman. . . . It would be easier for me to play the part of a lion than that of a lamb, that of a captain of volunteers than that of a gentle and obedient girl."

A few weeks later we find D'Eon paying a visit, again dressed as a bold dragoon, to the aged mother whom she had not seen for eighteen years and who now greeted her wandering son as daughter in spite of her masculine garb. Back again at Versailles she appears to have put on her new female finery; for at a feast of St Ursula she appeared "arrayed in sumptuous female attire, anointed with perfumes and adorned with bracelets, a necklace, earrings and rings, in which guise she was solemnly presented at Court."

Her appearance in Paris caused a great sensation, curious and amused crowds following her whenever she ventured into the streets. Some entertaining stories are told of this visit. Once, to a lady who said to her, "Chevalier, when you were a man you had, I remember, a very handsome leg," she retorted, as she pulled up her petticoats, "Parbleu! if you are curious to see it again, here it is." She made open fun of her petticoats and cap, saying on one occasion, "It is very hard, after having been a captain, to be degraded to a *cornet*" (a word which in French signifies a woman's head-dress as well as a subaltern of horse).

"As to the person and stature of our female hero," wrote a contributor to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, "M'lle D'Eon has a handsome neck and

bosom, and appears to advantage as a woman. Indeed, as she formerly made herself a beard, her chin is furnished with some hairs, which she employs herself with nipping; her complexion is fair; her stature about five feet four inches. She makes her curtsey in a rustic fashion without moving her thighs, but bending her knees forward with great quickness. On being advised to put on some rouge, her answer was that she had tried it, but that it would not stick on her face."

Mademoiselle D'Eon appears to have found some difficulty in breaking away from old masculine habits, for we are told that, "having always, in her former state of life, shown great attention to the ladies, she finds it difficult to restrain it; at table when she sits near them, she is always ready to fill their glasses; at coffee, no sooner has a lady emptied her cup, than D'Eon, springs from her chair to hand it to the table"—all of which must have been a cause of considerable amusement to the ladies thus gallantly waited on.

Mademoiselle found her new character a source of such embarrassment that she was often unable to face the battery of curious eyes which was trained on her wherever she was seen, and would hide her face in her muff like some shy schoolgirl; and she pleaded quite pathetically for permission to wear men's clothes on weekdays, only reserving her skirts for Sundays and festivals—a permission which was refused.

After a few years of retirement in the town of her birth she left France to make her permanent home in England, now fully resigned to her female character and habiliments. Here she found her

chief recreation in her old pastime of fencing, in which she exhibited such skill that she was invited to meet the best fencers of the day in exhibition matches. In a match at Carlton House, in the presence of the Prince of Wales, she was pitted against Saint Georges, a fencer of European reputation; and though "encumbered with three petticoats, she not only parried all the thrusts of her powerful antagonist, but even touched him by what is termed a *coup de temps*, which all his dexterity could not ward off."

At this time, it should be remembered, D'Eon, was in her sixtieth year, and Saint Georges was in the prime of his manhood. A little later we find her appearing, again before the Prince of Wales, at the King's Theatre, where she fenced in armour, wearing a casque and plume to represent Minerva or Joan of Arc. At Ranelagh, Bath, Oxford and a dozen other towns she gave exhibitions of fencing, receiving in one bout such a severe thrust that she was disabled and confined to bed for some months.

The latter years of this remarkable man-woman were pathetically clouded by poverty. In spite of a subscription raised for her, and a benefit given by the managers of Ranelagh, she was reduced to such straits that she was compelled to sell her jewellery and plate at Christie's—a pair of earrings, it is interesting to note, realising £155, and a diamond cross and chain £110. When this money was exhausted, chiefly in paying her debts, she was dependent on the charity of a few devoted friends, and on a small annuity, of £50 a year, provided by the Duke of Queensberry, better remembered as "Old Q."

In her later years she lived, says Angelo, "a few doors beyond Astley's Theatre. She always dressed in black silk and (towards the close of her life) looked like a woman worn out with age and care"; while she herself records that her life "was spent in eating, drinking and sleeping, prayers, writing and working with Mrs Cole (her friend and landlady), repairing linen, gowns and head-dresses."

After passing her eightieth birthday she became almost bedridden and, growing weaker and weaker, passed away peacefully on the morning of 31st May 1810. The secret which for fifty years and more had puzzled and tantalised Europe was no longer in her keeping. Her death revealed the fact that *D'Eon was a man*, and the doctor who dissected the body, in the presence of the Earl of Yarborough, Sir Sidney Smith and others, gave a certificate to this effect—that D'Eon was of the masculine sex and of that sex only. We are told, however, that "the throat was by no means like a man's; that the shoulders were square, the breast remarkably full, the arms, hands and fingers those of a stout female; the hips were very small and the legs and feet corresponded with the arms."

Great as was the amazement throughout Europe at this revelation, no one was more astonished than old Mrs Cole, D'Eon's landlady, who had never doubted for a moment that her companion of so many years was a woman; and who was so overwhelmed by the discovery that she did not recover from the shock for several hours.

## THE SECRET OF THE ILE SAINTE-MARGUERITE

WHO was the mysterious man who for more than forty years was immured within prison walls, first at Pinerolo in the Italian Alps, later in the Ile Sainte-Marguerite, and lastly in the Bastille, forbidden under pain of death to show his face even to his gaolers or to breathe a word that might betray his identity; and every trace of whom was so ruthlessly destroyed when at last death brought him a tardy release from his miseries? Some declared that he was none other than the Duc de Vendôme, one of Anne of Austria's favourites, on whom Cardinal Mazarin's jealousy had wreaked this terrible vengeance; others asserted with equal confidence that he was Charles II.'s natural son, the Duke of Monmouth; while some dared to whisper that he was a very near kinsman to Louis XIV., the "grand monarque" himself.

The few who knew his true identity, also knew that it was only at the cost of life that they could betray it. Madame de Pompadour and others of the royal mistresses practised all their wiles in vain to learn the secret; Louis XVI. refused point-blank to communicate it to Marie Antoinette; and M. de Chamillard, although his son-in-law the Maréchal de la Feuillade went on his knees as the minister lay dying, begging him to reveal the mystery,



answered with his last breath that he could not and dared not do so.

It was a woman who at last succeeded in raising the veil which had so long concealed the mystery. Although the Regent had refused to reveal the secret to Louis XV. on the day before his royal ward reached his majority, he succumbed at last to the pleading of his daughter, the Duchesse de Berry, when, flinging herself into her father's arms, she besought him with cries and sobs to tell it to her. A few hours later the papers which held the clue to the mystery were in the hands of the Duc de Richelieu, the Duchesse's lover, and the story which they revealed was surely the most remarkable ever committed to paper.

This singular document was headed, "Account of the Birth and Education of the Unhappy Prince, restrained in prison by the Order of Louis XIV., told by the Prince's governor on his Death-bed"; and in brief outline this is the story it tells.

At midday on the 5th of September 1638 Louis XIII.'s queen, Anne of Austria, after more than twenty childless years, gave birth to an heir to the crown of France, to the great delight of her royal husband. But the King's pleasure was short-lived; for, a few hours later, he was warned by the midwife that her Majesty would bear a second child, news which he dreaded, for, long previously, he had been warned by prophecies that the Queen would bear two sons, and it was being said in Paris that if she should bring forth two dauphins, as foretold, it would be the height of misfortune for the state. The news threw the King into a state of great consternation, for there was no provision in

the Salic law for such a contingency as the birth of twin heirs to the throne; and his alarm was heightened by Cardinal Richelieu, whom he hurriedly sent for, and who promptly declared that, if a second child should be born, his birth must be carefully concealed, "for he might in future wish to become King and fight his brother to elevate a second line in the State and reign."

What was foretold, happened, for the Queen was delivered during the King's supper and gave birth to a second son more delicate and beautiful than the first, who never ceased to wail and cry, as if he already felt regret at having entered a life in which he would have so much to suffer. Louis, in his dilemma, determined to follow the Cardinal's advice; all who were present at the second child's birth were sworn to secrecy, and the infant was at once taken away in charge of the midwife, who was threatened with death if she ever revealed his identity. Under such conditions of mystery and tragedy opened the life of the most unhappy prince who was ever cradled. Banished from the palace of his royal parents, the infant Prince was tenderly cared for in the humble home of his foster-mother until, in early boyhood, he was handed over to the care of a nobleman, one of those who had sworn to guard the secret of his birth; and under his careful direction the Prince grew up to young manhood, handsome and intelligent beyond his fellows and bearing in his graceful and dignified exterior all the marks of his royal origin. Long, however, before this period of his life had been reached he had puzzled his brain in vain to discover who he was. That he was no ordinary youth was

proved by the money lavished on him, and by the deference paid to him even by his noble guardian. Who were his parents, where were they, and why was he not with them, were questions which filled his mind, and to which he could find no answer. One day, however, the solution to this puzzle came to him with dramatic suddenness. The secret of his birth was revealed, and he was overwhelmed by it.

During his guardian's absence he came across an open despatch-box full of letters; and impelled by curiosity he examined them. They were from the Queen and Cardinal Mazarin (Richelieu's successor), and in them he read words which could only have one meaning and that, for him, more bewildering and dazzling than even he, in his wildest conjectures, had ever dreamed of. He, the outcast, the no man's child, was son of the late King of France and twin-brother of the glorious Louis XIV., then occupying the most splendid throne in Europe—a throne which—could it be possible?—should have been his!

Here was a dramatic revolution in his life, and a splendid vista opened to a youth whose birth had hitherto been wrapped in obscurity! But could it be true? If he was indeed twin-brother of Louis XIV. there must be such a resemblance in features as would place the matter beyond all doubt. His guardian, whom he asked, declared that he had no portrait of the King. But there was in the house a pretty young governess who loved the Prince passionately and who could procure one for him. From her he got a portrait of Louis, and the moment his eyes fell on it he saw that, feature for

feature, it was his own exact presentment. So faithful indeed was the likeness that he, and not the great monarch, might have sat for it!

Jubilant at the discovery, and furious that the secret of his birth had been kept from him, he rushed with the tell-tale portrait into the presence of his guardian, exclaiming, "Behold, my brother! and this is who I am." But never was a discovery more fatal in its consequences. The Prince's guardian, in his consternation and alarm, immediately despatched a messenger to inform the King what had happened; and within a few hours the angry Sovereign gave orders that both guardian and Prince should be immured in the pestilential fortress-prison of Pinerolo, in the Italian Alps, where the cold and dampness were so terrible that "the hair of prisoners came off and their teeth dropped out." And here the Prince's governor, whose only crime had been his loyalty, shortly died, leaving his royal charge to a fate infinitely more to be dreaded than death.

Such was the strange and terrible story which the Regent, in a moment of parental weakness, had entrusted to his daughter's keeping, little dreaming that through her the secret so long jealously guarded would one day become the property of a horrified world. It was the long-sought clue to the identity of the "unknown prisoner" whose cruel fate had so roused the pity and anger of Europe, and who now stood revealed as the son of Louis XIII., condemned by his father and his twin-brother to a life which was worse than death, that their throne might stand secure.

It would be difficult to imagine anything more

pitiful than the plight of this ill-starred Prince after the death of his guardian and only friend. By this time the fierce sense of injury which had found vent in outbursts of impotent fury had given place to a hopeless resignation. Shut away from all sight of the outer world in his cell, with its walls streaming with moisture or hanging with icicles, forbidden to exchange a word with the grim warder who brought him food and drink twice a day, it is little wonder that he became a prey to a deep-seated melancholy or that he prayed for death to come and end his sufferings.

His brother, in distant Paris, revelling in his splendour and his pleasures, seemed to have forgotten his very existence until one day it was brought rudely to his memory. Rummaging among his mother's jewels in search of a trinket to give to one of his many lady-loves, Louis accidentally came across a bundle of papers in the handwriting of the late Queen, which contained references to her unhappy son. This reminder of his brother's existence filled Louis with alarm. Several of the countries of Europe were in arms against him ; the prison-fortress in the Italian Alps might fall into the hands of one or other of them, and with it the Prince himself. The possibility was appalling ; for in such an event his throne was not safe for a moment. Europe to a man would take up arms for his ill-used brother against himself, and his crown, and probably his life itself, would be the forfeit. At any cost the prisoner must be removed to a place of greater safety ; and the plan was soon arranged.

One day, after the Prince had spent about nine

years in his Pinerolo prison, his gaoler announced that a French nobleman had arrived and desired a few minutes' conversation with him. Trembling and agitated, the announcement so affected the prisoner that for a time he was unable to speak. Had it come at last, the long-despaired-of day of freedom? The thought was intoxicating, overwhelming in the emotion it excited. "Who is the gentleman?" he asked when at last he had mastered himself sufficiently to speak. "The Marquis of Cinq-Mars," was the answer. "Cinq-Mars!" He recalled the name as one of honour and high repute in France. It was a name moreover associated with freedom; for was it not a Cinq-Mars who had helped to assassinate Richelieu, one of his own chief enemies? The bearer of such a name could surely bring none but good news—news that his brother, the King, had at last relented and that he was to be restored to freedom.

"Tell M. de Cinq-Mars that I shall be pleased to see him," he said to the gaoler; and a moment later a tall, handsome, splendidly attired officer was greeting him with a deep obeisance and a low sweep of his plumed hat. "Monseigneur," said the magnificent stranger, "I am instructed by the King to give you this small parcel, containing an article, the use of which your Highness will understand when you have read his Majesty's commands. With your Highness's permission I will withdraw while you read one and inspect the other." When the door had closed behind the Marquis the prisoner took the order and read it. With feverish fingers he untied the parcel, from which an iron mask fell with a loud clatter. Then, with a cry of heart-

piercing agony and despair, he fell senseless to the floor.

“A few days later,” says Voltaire in his “*Siècle de Louis XIV.*,” “an unknown prisoner was sent, in the utmost secrecy, to the Ile de Sainte-Marguerite, off the coast of France. He was above the middle height, young, and had the most noble and handsome features. During the journey the prisoner wore a mask, the chin-piece of which had springs of steel which allowed him to eat with the mask on his face. Orders had been given to kill him if he uncovered himself.”

For twenty-nine years the Prince remained in this terrible island prison, wearing night and day the iron mask, the removal of which, even for a moment, might betray that fatal likeness to the “great and glorious Louis XIV.—the sun-god”; and no soul, of the few who knew his identity, dared to breathe a word lest an equally dreadful fate should befall him.

The agonies he suffered during this lifetime of awful isolation, brooding, until his brain reeled and reason tottered on her throne, over the cruelty and hopelessness of his fate, no pen can portray. His proud spirit was at last humbled in the dust; and his greatest ambition was to die and thus end a misery too great for human flesh to bear. No words of complaint escaped his lips; indeed his patience and the mute pathos of his anguish touched the hearts of the most callous of his gaolers.

In the early days of his imprisonment in the island he made several futile attempts to get into touch with the outer world, one of which is thus described by Voltaire. “One day the prisoner

wrote his name with a knife on a silver plate and threw the plate out of the window towards a boat which was at the foot of the wall. A fisherman, to whom the boat belonged, picked up the plate and took it to the Governor. He, startled, asked the fisherman :

“ ‘Have you read what is on this plate, and has anyone else seen you with it?’ ”

“ ‘I do not know how to read,’ replied the fisherman. ‘I have only just found it, and no one has seen me.’ ”

“The peasant was detained until the Governor ascertained for a fact that he had never learned to read and that no one had seen him.

“ ‘Go,’ he said ; ‘it is very lucky for you that you cannot read!’ ”

On another occasion, it is said, a friar found in the water near the prison a folded shirt of fine linen on which the Prince had written the story of his birth and his cruel fate. The shirt was at once taken to the Governor of the prison by its unlucky finder, who, although he swore that he had not read a word of what was on it, was found dead in his bed two days later—another victim to the fiendish conspiracy of which the Prince was the object.

Even death seemed to be in the conspiracy, for though he prayed earnestly for it every day it refused to come to his relief. After twenty-nine years of worse than death in Sainte-Marguerite’s Island the man in the iron mask was at last mercifully removed to the Bastille, which, dreaded prison though it was, seemed to him Paradise compared with the horrors from which it released him.

Here, we are told, “he was refused nothing



that he asked for, and his principal taste was for linen of an extraordinary fine quality and for laces. He played upon the guitar; they fed him as well as possible, and the Governor rarely seated himself in his presence. But all this homage to his rank only served to mock him in his misery. The iron mask had now been changed for one of velvet, which like its predecessor was never raised for a moment night or day; even to the doctor he was only permitted to speak through the mask; he might show his tongue, but never his face."

And thus it was until his last day, which was now happily near. For forty-three years that terrible mask concealed the features which would have proclaimed his kinship to the King, and he drew his last breath within its grim environment.

"On Monday, November 19th, 1703," the bald prison record runs, "The Unknown Prisoner, always masked with a mass of black velvet, whom M. de Cinq-Mars brought with him from the Ile Sainte-Marguerite, finding himself yesterday a little worse when coming out from the Mass, died to-day about 10 o'clock at night without having had a great illness. Surprised by death he was unable to receive the Sacraments, and our Almoner exhorted him for a minute before dying. He was interred Tuesday, Nov. 20th, at four in the afternoon, in the Cemetery of Saint Paul, our parish. His interment cost forty livres."

Thus obscurely perished, at the age of sixty-five, a prince who, if he had but entered life a few hours earlier, would have been one of the world's greatest sovereigns and whose only crime was that he was not wanted. His very name was unknown to those

who conducted his burial service ; and it was said that his head was either cut off or his features gashed after death, while quicklime or chemicals which would consume the body were placed in his coffin.

Nor did this desecration of his remains satisfy his royal brother and persecutor. No trace of his existence must be allowed to survive him. Everything that had been used by him or associated with him was destroyed ; his silver dinner service was melted down, his furniture and bedding were consumed by fire, and the very walls which had been mute witnesses of his tragedy were scraped and replastered, lest some tell-tale scratch should reveal to keen eyes the story of one of the greatest wrongs which ever blackened the pages of human history.

## THE KING AND THE PRETTY QUAKERESS

OF all the romantic stories of royal *mésalliances* there is not one at once more alluring and more tantalising than that of George III. and Hannah Lightfoot, the demure and pretty Quakeress, whom he is said to have made his wife while he was still in his teens—a story which every circumstance seems to conspire to invest with fascination and mystery.

Even as a youth, when the fancy most “lightly turns to thoughts of love,” George was noted for his indifference to female charms. He was described as “dull-witted and unsentimental to the last degree”; Horace Walpole, who had a keen scent for scandal, dismisses him as “chaste”; while his tutor once said, “although the Prince has the greatest temptation to gallant with the ladies, who lay themselves out in the most shameless manner to draw him in, they were powerless to attract him. ‘If I were not what I am they would take no notice of me,’ was his discerning if somewhat cynical way of speaking of their allurements. . . . He has no tendency to vice, and has as yet virtuous principles.” Such was the prince’s character, as given by one in an exceptional position to judge of it at the very time he is said to have fallen under the spell of an obscure, if charming, little Quakeress, and to have carried

his infatuation to the extreme of making her his wife.

In much later years, too, George expressed the utmost abhorrence of similar lapses in his own family. When his brother, the Duke of Cumberland, married that bewitching Irish widow, Mrs Horton, his anger knew no bounds. He called him "fool" and "villain" and ordered him out of his sight. And when his other brother, the Duke of Gloucester, made a similar *mésalliance* with Lady Waldegrave, he was so furious that, when his rage had spent itself, he passed the night in hysterical tears.

Over his eldest son's amours he was still more virtuously indignant. "I thank Heaven," he wrote to Lord North, "*my* morals and course of life have but little resembled those too prevalent in the present age; and certainly, of all the objects of this life, the one I have most at heart is to form my children that they may be useful examples and worthy of imitation." In a later letter to Lord North on the subject of the Prince of Wales' relations with Mrs Robinson, he speaks more plainly still. "I am happy," the letter concludes, "at being able to say that *I never was personally engaged in such a transaction*, which perhaps makes me feel this the stronger."

Here surely we have abundant evidence to suggest that George III. was one of the least likely of men to become a slave to passion or to allow himself to engage in a love intrigue that led to the altar. And yet in spite of its inherent improbability, and of the obscurity and contradictions in which the story is involved, there seems

little doubt that he lost his heart completely to Hannah Lightfoot, and a possibility that he made her his wife and the legitimate mother of his children. Such at least is the conclusion at which I have been compelled to arrive after a very careful investigation of all the evidences.

It is rather singular and perhaps a little significant that one finds very few references during George's long life to this amour. Indeed Mr Lewis Melville, who has investigated the matter thoroughly, appears to have discovered only two. In the *Citizen* of 24th February 1776 the following advertisement appears:—"Court Fragments. Which will be published for the Use, Instruction and Amusement of Royal Infants and young, promising Noblemen. 1. The History and Adventures of Miss L-hf--t, the fair Quaker, wherein will be faithfully portrayed some striking pictures of female constancy and princely gratitude, which terminated in the untimely death of that lady and the sudden death of a disconsolate mother." And again, *The Royal Register* for 1779 has this passage: "It is not believed even at this time by many persons who live in the world that King George had a mistress previous to his marriage. Such a circumstance was reported by many, believed by some, disputed by others, but proved by none; and with such a suitable caution was this intrigue conducted that if the body of the people called Quakers, of which this young lady in question was a member, had not divulged the fact by the public proceedings of their meeting concerning it, it would in all probability have remained a matter of doubt to this day."

From this statement it would appear that there had been a great deal of gossip and speculation about the King's relations with the Quakeress within a few years of the romance itself, and that Hannah's conduct had come under the notice of the leaders of the sect of which she was a member. It thus seems clear that there was some foundation for the story which in later years assumed such a circumstantial form.

Having thus in a measure cleared the ground let us get to the story itself, one of the most romantic and mysterious in the secret annals of royalty. And it must be premised that it is told largely on the authority of Hannah's own relatives and intimate friends, living at the time and in a position to know the truth.

It seems that Hannah Lightfoot was the daughter of a small linendraper in St James's market, at the back of the Haymarket. "I well remember the shop," writes a contributor to *The Monthly Magazine*. "It was a linendraper's; and as the principal part of the business lay with the country market people, the proprietors were accustomed to keep a cask of good ale, a glass of which was always offered to their customers. At that time the ravages of the small-pox, unchecked by inoculation, left but few women who were not marked by its destructive powers; and the possessors of a fair, unsullied face were followed by crowds of admirers. Such was the case of the Misses Gunning, who paraded the Mall in St James's Park, guarded by a troop of admirers with drawn swords, to prevent the populace from encroaching on this hallowed spot sacred to gentility. The

train of Miss L—, as she passed to and from the meeting in Hemming's Row, St Martin's Lane, was as numerous."

But the pretty Quakeress had much more than a face unmarked by small-pox to commend her to the favour of the opposite sex. "With her dainty little head running over with golden curls, large blue eyes dancing with merriment and mischief, dimpled cheeks with a bloom as delicate as any peach, and with a *petite* figure as graceful as that of a sylph, one cannot wonder that Hannah, whose charms were enhanced by her demure Quaker dress, set going pit-a-pat the heart of every gallant whose eyes fell on so fair a vision."

Such is one of many descriptions of the maid who enslaved a king; and although it may owe a little to the writer's imagination it is largely borne out by a miniature of the little Quakeress which I have seen in the possession of one of her reputed descendants by her royal lover. In the miniature the face is oval and rather long, with small and delicately modelled features, and with an expression of demure modesty in keeping rather with her character as a Quakeress than as the inspirer of a royal passion.

It may be that the fame of Hannah's beauty, which must have been the subject of much gossip, came to George's ears and stimulated his curiosity; or it may be, as asserted by some, that it was the accidental sight of her while passing through St James's market on his way to the Opera, or to Parliament, that first set the prince's heart in a flutter. Of this nothing seems to be certainly known. "Hannah Lightfoot," says one writer,

“when residing with her father and mother, was frequently seen by the King when he drove by, going to and from Parliament House.” “The Prince,” says another writer, “had often noticed her in his way from Leicester House to St James’, and was struck with her person.” Whatever the truth may be, there seems little doubt that the first meeting of the lovers, so widely severed in rank, and whose lives were to be so closely linked, was accidental, and that it kindled the fire of love in George’s sluggish breast.

“The Prince,” writes Robert Huish, in his “Life of George III.,” “though surrounded with all the emblems of Royalty, and invested with sovereign authority, was nevertheless but a man, subject to all the frailties of his nature, impelled by the powerful tide of passion. . . . His affections became enchained; he looked no more to Saxe-Gotha nor to Brunswick for an object on which to lavish his love; he found one in the secret recesses of Hampton, whither he often repaired, concealed by the protecting shades of night, and there he experienced what seldom falls to the lot of princes—the bliss of the purest love.”

Huish is probably wrong in giving Hampton as the secret meeting-place of the young prince and his low-born lady-love. It is more probable that Knightsbridge was the trysting-place, and that it was under the roof of a man named Perryn, a relative of Hannah, that George was thus enabled to taste “the bliss of the purest love.” It is said that Miss Elizabeth Chudleigh, one of Queen Charlotte’s maids of honour (later, the notorious Duchess of Kingston), arranged these clandestine



meetings and generally made matters smooth for the young lovers ; and one can well believe it, for it was eminently a *rôle* in which this lady would revel.

But, in spite of this carefully planned secrecy, news of the prince's escapade seems to have come to the ears of his royal relatives, to their great consternation. Here was a shocking state of affairs—the heir to the throne of England, who had just refused point-blank to marry the Princess Sophia of Brunswick, engaged in a low intrigue with a shopkeeper's daughter, and, for anything they knew, possibly married to her! It would be impossible to conceive a greater calamity. At all costs the foolish prince must be extricated from this terrible dilemma ; or at least he must be prevented from consummating his folly by marrying the girl.

The first step was obviously to find a husband for her elsewhere and at once ; and this proved to be no difficult matter. It was discovered that Hannah had, among her many suitors before her Prince Charming stole her away, a young man called Isaac Axford, who served behind the counter of one Barton or Bolton, a grocer in Ludgate Hill. Axford had lost his heart to the fair Quakeress, whom he had served with groceries for some time past ; and when it was proposed by the Court emissary that he should make her his wife forthwith, we may be sure he was by no means unwilling, even without the large sum of money which was offered as a reward for this very agreeable act. How Hannah's consent to this high-handed arrangement was procured is not known ; but on the evidence of Axford's own niece there seems little doubt that the

marriage actually took place—at Keith's Chapel, according to a member of the Lightfoot family. As a matter of fact, the Register of Marriages at St George's Chapel, Mayfair, contains an entry, under date 11th December 1753, of the marriage of Isaac Axford, of St Martin's, Ludgate, to Hannah Lightfoot.

What the prince was doing to allow his enslaver thus to become the wife of another is not revealed; nor is it very clear what happened after this singular union. Axford does not seem to have been long left in undisturbed possession of his bride. According to one of his friends "the lady lived six weeks with her husband, who was fondly attached to her; but one evening when he happened to be from home, a coach-and-four came to the door, when she was conveyed into it and carried off at a gallop, no one knew whither"; another deponent declares that "after they married they cohabited for a fortnight or three weeks, when she was one day called out from dinner, and put into a chaise-and-four and taken off, and he never saw her afterwards"; while a third account is that "she was taken away from the *church door* the same day they were married, and Axford never heard of her afterwards."

Precisely how long the Ludgate Hill shopman kept his unwilling bride from the arms of her royal lover is a matter of little concern. If we are to believe the evidence, the fact is clear that his happiness was short-lived and that within a few weeks at the longest she was spirited away under romantic and mysterious circumstances. As for the disconsolate widower, his later history is as ascertained as it is uninteresting. He is said to have

searched far and wide—at Weymouth, Windsor, Kew, and elsewhere, for his vanished wife, but all to no purpose. All trace of her was lost as effectually as if she had vanished into the air. He is said even to have petitioned the King himself on bended knee for enlightenment, but with no more satisfactory result. Finally, abandoning his quest in despair, he found solace in another wife, a Miss Bartlett, of Keevil, in Wiltshire, and spent the rest of his long life as keeper of a grocer's shop at Warminster, dying at the good age of eighty-five.

Meanwhile what had become of the bride so mysteriously abducted almost before her orange-blossoms had had time to fade? Frankly, nothing certain is known of her future life. There is no reliable evidence that she was ever seen again; and once more we find ourselves in the nebulous land of conjecture. According to a writer in *The Monthly Magazine*, July 1821, "A retreat was provided for Hannah in one of those large houses surrounded with a high wall and garden, in the district of Cat-and-Mutton Fields, on the east side of Hackney Road, leading from Mile End Road, where she lived, and, it is said, died." And we are asked to believe that in this suburban asylum, shut out from the prying world by its lofty walls, the linendraper's daughter received her royal lover and bore children to him during the few brief years that remained to her of life. Could anything be more romantic, more mysterious? But whether she was spirited away to the Hackney Road retreat or to some other equally safe place, it is probable that the prince at least knew the secret of her hiding-place and that he continued

the *liaison* there. Of all her relatives not one appears to have caught a glimpse of her after her abduction. "None of her family," says one of them, "have seen her since, though her mother had a letter or two from her, but at last died of grief." It is asserted that Hannah bore several children to the prince, of whom three sons rose to high positions in the army.

The eldest of these sons of the Royal George and Hannah Lightfoot appears to have emigrated to South Africa, where it is said his descendants are living and flourishing to-day under the appropriate name of Rex. "I was at the Cape of Good Hope in 1830," writes a contributor to *Notes and Queries*, in February 1871, "and spent some time at Mr George Rex's hospitable residence at the Knysna. I understood from him that he had been about thirty-four years in the Colony, and I should suppose he was about sixty-eight years of age, of a strong, robust appearance, and the exact resemblance in features to George III. This would bring him to about the time when George III. married Hannah Lightfoot. On Mr Rex's first arrival in the Colony he occupied a high position in the Colonial Government, and received an extensive grant of land at the Knysna. He retired there and made most extensive improvements. His eldest son, named John, at the time I was there, was living with his father, and will now most probably be the representative of George Rex." When, too, the Duke of Edinburgh visited Cape Colony in 1868 he was most hospitably entertained by these alleged descendants of his royal great-grandfather and the linendraper's daughter.

In addition to these sons there appears to have been at least one daughter of George and Hannah, if we are to believe a contributor to *The Monthly Magazine* who writes (in 1821), "I have lately seen a halfpay cavalry officer from India, who knew a gentleman of the name of *Dalton*, who married a daughter of this H. Lightfoot by the King, but who is dead, leaving several accomplished daughters who, with the father, are coming to England. These daughters are secluded from society like nuns, but no pains spared in their education."

Whatever may be the precise truth of these matters (and this will almost certainly never be known) we are reasonably safe in concluding that George III. had a love affair with Hannah Lightfoot and that she bore children to him. The evidences, however conflicting in detail, are sufficiently strong to justify this conclusion. The important point to consider now is this, "Was Hannah Lightfoot the wife, and not merely the mistress of her princely lover?" This is a question, the importance of which it would be difficult to exaggerate; for if Hannah were legally united to George she must have become, on his accession to the throne, Queen of England, however unknown and unacknowledged, for the union took place long before the Royal Marriage Act was even thought of.

What evidence is there that there was a marriage of this oddly assorted pair? Truth compels the answer,—none of the least validity. It is true that no less well-informed a person than William Beckford declared that they were "married by Dr Wilmot at Kew Chapel, in 1759; William Pitt (after Earl of Chatham) and one Anne Taylor being

the witnesses." And in a book called "The Appeal for Royalty," published in 1858, appeared what professed to be copies of the marriage certificates, one of which is said to be in the handwriting of George himself—thus :

"April 17th, 1759.

"The marriage of these parties was this day duly solemnised in Kew Chapel, according to the rites & ceremonies of the Church of England by myself,

J. WILMOT.

"GEORGE R.

"HANNAH.

"Witnesses to this marriage—

"W. PITT.

"ANNE TAYLOR."

And :

"May 27th, 1759.

"This is to certify that the marriage of these parties, George Prince of Wales to Hannah Lightfoot, was duly solemnised this day according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, at their residence at Peckham, by myself,

"J. WILMOT.

"GEORGE GUELPH.

"HANNAH LIGHTFOOT.

"Witnesses to the marriage of these parties—

"WILLIAM PITT.

"ANNE TAYLOR."

More than this, a verbatim copy of Hannah's last will and testament is given in these words :

"HAMPSTEAD, July 7th, 1768.

"Provided I depart this life, I recommend my two sons and my daughter to the kind protection of

their Royal Father, my husband, his Majesty George III., bequeathing whatever property I die possessed of to such dear offspring of my ill-fated marriage. In case of the death of each of my children, I give and bequeath to Olive Wilmot, the daughter of my best friend, Dr Wilmot, whatever property I am entitled to or am possessed of at the time of my death.—Amen.

“(Signed) HANNAH REGINA.

“*Witnesses* :—

“J. DUNNING.

“WILLIAM PITT.”

Without dwelling on the obvious inconsistencies of these documents, or on the strong improbability that Pitt could, under any circumstances, have connived at such a union, or that Hannah could have dubbed herself REGINA, it is sufficient to say that the documents have been pronounced in a court of law “gross and rank forgeries.” And we may also dismiss as of doubtful authenticity the statements in “The Secret History of the Court of England” that George III. during his attack of madness in 1805 constantly cried out for “his dearly loved wife,” “the wife of his choice,” while showing the utmost abhorrence of his queen; and that Queen Charlotte declared to her son, the Prince of Wales, “Your father would have been a happier man if he had remained true to his marriage with Hannah Lightfoot.” These stories may or may not be true; it is unfortunately impossible to say.

That there were many who firmly believed that Hannah was George’s lawful wedded wife, in spite

of the absence of all proof, is beyond question ; and it is said that among them was Queen Caroline, the unhappy spouse of the fourth George. "The Queen," to quote from a pamphlet published four years after George III.'s death, "at this time laboured under a very curious, and to me unaccountable species of delusion. She fancied herself in reality neither a queen nor a wife. She believed his present Majesty (George IV.) to have been actually married to Mrs Fitzherbert ; and she as fully believed that his late Majesty, George III., was married to Miss Hannah Lightfoot, the beautiful Quakeress, previous to his marriage with Queen Charlotte ; that a marriage was a second time solemnised at Kew (under the colour of an evening's entertainment) after the death of Miss Lightfoot ; and as that lady did not die till after the births of the present King and His Royal Highness, the Duke of York, her Majesty really considered the Duke of Clarence the true heir to the Throne. Her Majesty thought also that the knowledge of this circumstance by the Ministers was the true cause of George IV.'s retaining the Tory administration when he came into power.

"How the Queen came seriously to entertain such romantic suppositions as these, it is not for me to know. It may be perhaps regarded as a melancholy proof of the principles and abilities of some persons surrounding royal personages ; but that she did entertain them I know well, and let any of her Majesty's friends contradict me if they can. If they do, and they require me to mention my authority, I will do so if called upon in a proper manner and in a proper place."



But interesting as the speculation may be, there is small hope that this question of the marriage of George III. to the pretty Quakeress will ever be extricated from the region of mere surmise. The principals, and all who may have been in a position to know the truth, have long been dust. It is not at all likely that any still undiscovered evidence will add to our enlightenment; and the story must remain as inscrutable and tantalising to remote posterity as to those who sought in vain for the key to its secret in the far-off days when the Prince and his Cinderella lived and loved.

## A ROYAL CHANGELING

WHEN Thomas Wynn, first Baron Newborough in the Peerage of Ireland, fared forth from his native Wales one day in 1782 to spend a few years of retirement in distant Tuscany, he little dreamt, we may be sure, that he was destined to play a conspicuous part in one of the most mysterious dramas that have baffled the curiosity of the world.

And never, in fact, was any man less equipped by nature or less disposed by temperament to pose as a romantic figure. In person he was plain and unattractive, in temperament sedate even beyond his years; he was far advanced in the forties, had recently lost his wife, a daughter of the second Earl of Egmont, and his fortune had been so impaired by patriotic extravagance in building forts and maintaining a small army of volunteers to resist a foreign invasion, that it was necessary to face a period of exile for the purpose of retrenchment.

Such was Lord Newborough when he turned his back on his stately Welsh homes, Bodvean Hall and Glynllivon Park, on his retainers and his mortgaged acres, and in company with his ten-year-old son made his journey to Southern Europe, a dejected and disillusioned man.

It was to Florence that his lordship first directed his steps, and in the lovely Tuscan capital, with its gorgeous palaces and churches

and its environment of fruitful vineyards and gardens, he led the obscure life of a poor refugee, known, if at all, by his shabby attire, his sordid economies, and his eccentricities of manner. His only recreation seems to have been an occasional visit to the theatre; and from this little indulgence sprang all the romantic incidents which this story will unfold.

Among the ballerinas at the principal opera house in Florence was one whose beauty, grace and abandon marked her as a creature apart from her companions. With an aureole of rich, auburn hair, a complexion of "cream and roses," dancing blue eyes, and a fairylike lightness and grace of movement, she seemed the embodiment of childish charm and gaiety. To the middle-aged man long sated with life's pleasures she came as a revelation of new delights of which he had ceased even to dream; and to realise these delights by making the little fairy his own became his great ambition.

"One day," says Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, "a letter arrived for the young actress, which her father opened and read. He then ordered her to dress with speed and care in her best clothes to receive a visitor. A plain middle-aged gentleman called, who proved to be Lord Newborough. He repeated his visits, declared that he had been charmed by her appearance on the stage, had become enamoured of the girl, and wished to marry her. She tells us that she loathed both the proposal and the maker of it: but her parents impressed on her the advantages of such a grand marriage." A few days later, in February 1786, Sir Horace Mann, our minister at Florence, wrote

home, "Lord Newborough, who has resided here in a very obscure manner since 1782, on the 11th instant signed a contract of marriage with a singing girl about thirteen years of age, the daughter of a constable."

In vain the child rebelled against this monstrous union with a man old enough to be her grandfather. To her tears and pleadings alike her parents turned deaf ears. "Instead of weeping and railing she ought, they said, to be very proud and grateful that such a great signor should stoop to woo her; he would make a grand lady of her; and then he was so kind, so devoted—why she ought to go down on her knees and kiss his hand." The forces arrayed against her were too strong, and thus it came to pass that one October day in 1786 Maria Stella Chiappini, the constable's daughter, stood before the altar of Santa Maria Novella, of Florence, by the side of her middle-aged bridegroom, and was driven back to Fiesole "my Lady Newborough."

But let us go back a few years and see under what conditions Maria Stella, Baroness Newborough, made her first appearance in the strange and romantic drama of her life. It was in the tiny village of Modigliana, on the slopes of the Apennines, that she opened her eyes on the world which was to prove so full of tantalising mystery to her. In a register of the Church of St Stephen you may still read that "Maria Stella Petronilla, was born yesterday to Lorenzo Ferdinand Chiappini, public constable of this place, and Vincentia Diligenti, his wife, both of this parish, and was baptised on the 17th April, 1773."

Maria Stella was the first of the constable's children, though others followed quickly; and her earliest memories were of harsh treatment by her mother, whose affection was lavished on her brothers and sisters—never on herself. Fortunately her father was kind; and the lady at the great house of Modigliana, the Countess Camilla Borghi, made a special favourite of the pretty little daughter of the village constable, often inviting her to spend a few days with her, and loading her with presents and favours. It was a sad day for Maria Stella when her father took her away from the village home to Florence, where he blossomed into squadron officer of gendarmes; but she found compensation in being taught to sing and dance, and her little cup of joy was full when, as a child of ten, she was allowed to appear on the stage, which three years later was to prove the portal to a very different life.

That it would be a happier life she never dared to hope. With her bridal finery still on her, she retired to her own room, and spent several days in solitary weeping; nor would she even speak to her husband until she was compelled. Lord Newborough was ill-equipped to please his child-wife. He was jealous, bad-tempered, and so eccentric that a serious effort was made to take the management of his own affairs out of his hands. Nor were matters improved by the fact that he and his wife lived under the same roof as the Chiappini family, a circumstance which led to constant friction. On one occasion a family quarrel resulted in an exchange of blows, and Lord Newborough left the house in high dudgeon, his wife refusing to accom-

pany him. He had not been gone many hours, however, before he wrote threatening suicide unless she came to him, to which Maria Stella replied :

“MY DEAR OLD LUNATIC,—If you wish to give me the greatest proof of your affection, hasten to carry out your threat.”

It was clear that such an unhappy state of things could not be allowed to last long, especially as his lordship was constantly being pestered by his father-in-law for money (the price of his consent to the marriage) and was actually arrested and lodged in gaol for delaying payment of the stipulated allowance. And thus it came to pass that in the summer of 1792 he shook the dust of Italy off his feet, and returned with his wife to Wales, where they were received with every demonstration of joy by his tenants and friends. “They gave us the most splendid reception,” Lady Newborough records. “The horses were taken out of our carriage, and the people dragged us up to Glynllivon. We were escorted by six hundred people ; and in the evening the park and town and all the hills and the country round were brilliantly illuminated. All the nobility of the neighbourhood came to offer us their homage, and for six consecutive months it was a continuous feast.”

For some years Lord and Lady Newborough lived fairly happily together, dividing their time between London and Wales ; and after giving birth to two sons, each of whom succeeded in turn to the Barony, Maria Stella was left a widow. Three years later, she married again, this time Baron Edward Ungern-Sternberg, a Russian noble,

to whom she bore a son, and from whom she soon seems to have become estranged. During all these years Maria Stella had no suspicion of the mystery that obscured her birth and was now to cloud the remainder of her life—a mystery as tantalising and as inscrutable as any human being has ever attempted to solve.

It was in the year 1820, ten years after Maria Stella's second unhappy marriage, that the veil which had so long concealed this mystery from her was first lifted. Accompanied by her Russian son she had gone to Florence in order to be able to see more of her father, whose health was failing. Prepared to lavish affection on him and to nurse him tenderly, she found every obstacle put in her way by her family, while her father, instead of welcoming her as a daughter, treated her with a chilling deference, always addressing her as *Miladi*. He was evidently brooding over something unknown to her, for he muttered vaguely of some wrong he had done, and of his gratitude to her, and repeated names familiar to her in her childhood.

One day when she called to see him he was evidently near the end. She took his hand, which he pressed with his little remaining strength; and as he looked pathetically at her he tried to speak, but the only words she could distinguish were these, *Dio mio! Barant Baranto*. A day or two later he was dead. Vainly did Lady Newborough (as I still prefer to call her) rack her brain to discover the meaning of the mysterious word *Baranto*, until it flashed on her that it might be a corruption of *baratto*, an exchange; but this solution conveyed nothing to her brain.

A few months later, however, light came when a packet was placed in her hands addressed in the handwriting of the dead Chiappini. Its contents were indeed startling ; they revolutionised her life. After explaining that he had entrusted the letter to a friend, in the hope that after his death it might reach her, Chiappini (for he was the writer of this strange confession) continued :

“ But my daughter you are not, and this denial of a relationship which your kindness has made me love, is the bitter portion of this confession. Instead of being the child of an obscure father in a small provincial town, you are by birth that which a righteous Providence has made you. About four months before your birth a great foreign nobleman and his lady arrived in our town with a numerous Italian retinue. It was said they were French and of illustrious rank and of great wealth. The French lady was soon hoping to become a mother, and so was my wife. I was much astonished by the affability of this great foreigner, who sent for me, gave me money, and made me drink wine with him. After repeated conversations, he told me that it was absolutely necessary, on account of the weightiest family reasons, that the child to whom his Countess was about to give birth should be a son ; and he urged me, if it should prove to be a daughter, and if my wife bore a son, to allow the children to be exchanged.

“ It was in vain that I attempted to dissuade him ; and he succeeded in over-persuading me by large bribes and offers of favour and protection, to consent to the exchange. He assured me that my boy should be nobly provided for, and that he



would fill one of the highest places in Europe. Everything turned out according to the Count's precautions. His lady had a daughter, and my wife a son; the children were changed; I was made comparatively rich; the Countess speedily recovered; and she, her husband, my boy and their numerous Italian suite speedily left our quiet little town and were never more heard of.

“For seven years large sums of money were sent to me, with the strictest injunctions as to secrecy, and horrible threats in the event of my divulging the strange story. I was enjoined, above all, to keep the matter secret from you when you grew up. My wife and my eldest son were alone admitted to the full knowledge of the transaction. And this will account for their anxiety to prevent any intercourse between us; for they well knew that I had long ago repented of the injury that I had done you, and that I was anxious to make whatever reparation to you was still in my power. Truly thankful was I when the great English Lord placed you in the position to which your birth entitled you; and great was my anxiety, when you returned to Italy, to throw myself at your feet, confessing the truth and craving your pardon. This was denied me in life. I hope that it may please God to cause this confession to reach you after my death, and that you will even then grant me your pardon. If I had it now I should die more contented.”

Maria Stella's feelings as this strange story was unfolded to her in the sacred words of a dying and now dead man, may be better imagined than described. This then was the wonderful secret which at last made clear much that had mystified

her in the past—the difference between her own fair, refined beauty and grace and the dark, bourgeois plainness of her sister and brothers; the favour of the Countess Borghi, who no doubt suspected the story of her birth; the deference of the Chiappinis, and the obstacles they placed in the way of intercourse with her father; and the true meaning of the mysterious word *Baranto*, over which she had puzzled so long.

The sense of the great wrong done to her at her birth was merged in the exultant thought that she was no peasant's child, but the daughter of a high-placed nobleman, and, as such, at least the equal of her husband and of all the great people of their circle to whom she looked up as to creatures of another world. But the natural mood of jubilation at finding herself the daughter of a noble house soon gave way to an overmastering curiosity and resolve to probe this strange secret to the bottom, to discover who her real, if false, parents were, and to demand the recognition due to her exalted birth.

To appeal to the Chiappini family, especially to her supposed brother Thomas, who had always thwarted and opposed her, she knew was useless. But she heard that two old servants of the Countess Borghi were still alive, and to them and to two priests who had been confessors of old Chiappini and of the Countess she decided to go for information. One of the priests, in answer to her inquiries, declared that he had always thought she was a daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany; the other was positive that her parents were the Count and Countess of Joinville—thus leaving her in a greater state of bewilderment than before.

Travelling to Faenza she interviewed the two old servants of the Borghi household, who at sight of her exclaimed, "How like you are to the Countess of Joinville." The story they revealed was a striking confirmation of that told by Chiappini in his last hours. "They had seen the de Joinvilles at Modigliana in 1773," they said, "and the Count, who was a handsome man, save that he had an eruption on his face, was very intimate with the village constable, whose wife, like the Countess, was about to become a mother." After telling the story of the exchange of infants, they continued, "The Count, directly after the event, went secretly to Brisighella, but was there recognised and put under arrest. The Countess with her infant, the boy-changeling, left Modigliana when able to travel, and was seen no more. The Borghis, being aware of her noble birth, pitied the deserted child in her incongruous surroundings and showed her great kindness as long as she remained at Modigliana."

After listening to this circumstantial statement, which so strongly supported what she had already learnt from Chiappini and the priest, Lady Newborough could have little doubt of its truth, or of the identity of her father as the Count of Joinville. Her next step was to discover who the Count really was, and with this object she travelled to the little town of Joinville in the Champagne district, where she learned that the title de Joinville belonged to the family of the Duke of Orleans. But even now she was far from suspecting how very exalted her origin really was.

Lady Newborough next made her way to Paris, where, if anywhere, she thought she could discover

the real identity of this mysterious nobleman, who was undoubtedly her father; and establishing herself in one of the principal hotels she published the following advertisement in the leading newspapers:—"If the heir of the Comte de Joinville, who travelled and resided in Italy in the year 1773, will call at the Hotel de —, Rue —, he will hear of something greatly to his advantage."

She had not long to wait for an answer: for within a few hours of the appearance of the advertisement a corpulent gentleman on crutches was ushered into her presence and announced as Monsieur l'Abbé de St Fare, who introduced himself as the envoy of Monseigneur the Duke of Orleans. "His Highness," said the Abbé, "is keenly interested in Madame's advertisement, for he is heir to the Count of Joinville." "How so?" asked Lady Newborough. "My Lady is probably not aware," answered the Abbé, "that his Highness's father, the late Duke of Orleans, was also Count of Joinville, and assumed that title when travelling in Italy, before the present Duke was born."

Lady Newborough with difficulty concealed her delight at hearing this. "Is it," continued the Abbé, not observing the effect of his information, "some great inheritance that his Highness is entitled to?" Lady Newborough, expressing a strong inclination to smile at such a suggestion coming from the agent of the grasping Louis Philippe, explained that there was no question of an inheritance, but that she was anxious to solve the mystery of a birth connected with the Count of Joinville's visit to Italy in 1773. The effect of this statement

on the Abbé was electric and almost ludicrous. Rising hastily, purple and embarrassed, he made a confused apology for having to leave her ladyship in order to keep an important engagement, and with a succession of profound bows, he hobbled out of the room. Lady Newborough discovered later that the corpulent Abbé whom she had scared away so precipitately was an illegitimate brother of the late Duke of Orleans and uncle of the present Duke, later to be known as King Louis Philippe.

Lady Newborough appears to have been rather dense in arriving at conclusions : for even after this significant interview it does not seem to have occurred to her to identify her father, the Count of Joinville, with the late Duke of Orleans ; but enlightenment was to come very soon after. A few days later, in company with her young son by her Russian husband, she was visiting the picture gallery in the Palais Royal when the boy, pointing to a portrait, exclaimed : “ Look, mamma ! how like Signor Chiappini ! ” Lady Newborough, glancing at the picture, was so struck by the strong resemblance to her late supposed father that she inquired of an official whose portrait it was. “ His Highness, the Duke of Orleans, ” was the startling answer. Then at last the truth flashed on her with irresistible vividness. Her father was none other than the late Duke of Orleans : she was thus a princess of the blood royal ; while the base-born son of the village constable, for whom she had been exchanged at birth, was the present Duke, and the coming King of France !

Here was indeed a dazzling revolution in her life. She already knew that she was nobly born ;

but in her wildest speculations she had never dreamt that she was of royal birth, and, in fact, the first lady in all France, Full of her new discovery she hastened back to Italy to prosecute further inquiries in its light; and she found abundant evidence to confirm her conclusions.

Old inhabitants of Brisighella recalled the arrest, by the order of the Cardinal-Legate, at Ravenna, of a French count whose appearance, even to the blotchy face, was identical with the description and portraits of the Duke of Orleans. Lodovichetti, a Ravenna lawyer, told how, when the prisoner was brought before the Cardinal, the latter took him into his private room, and when he learned who he was immediately set him at liberty; while one witness, J. Tondini, declared positively his assurance that Maria Stella was the child of Philippe Egalité—the Duke.

Equipped with this evidence Lady Newborough appealed to the Court of the Bishop of Faenza for a rectification of the baptismal entry in the register at Modigliana. The matter was thoroughly investigated, with the assistance of counsel, and the finding of the court was this: "It is plainly proved that the Comte Louis de Joinville exchanged his daughter for the son of Lorenzo Chiappini, and that Demoiselle de Joinville was baptised under the name of Maria Stella, with the false statement that she was the daughter of L. Chiappini and his wife."

This episcopal admission that Lady Newborough was in fact the daughter of the Count of Joinville was a substantial step towards the establishment of her true identity; but it still remained to place

beyond all doubt that the Count was none other than the Royal Duke, whose eldest living child she now considered herself to be ; and the attempts to establish this were destined to cloud and embitter the remainder of her days. Better a thousand times that she had lived and died the daughter of the Tuscany constable than to be thus self-condemned to prove her royal origin to the satisfaction of a sceptical and indifferent world.

Lady Newborough found no lack of volunteers to assist her in her task ; and, as was inevitable perhaps, she became the victim of a succession of plausible swindlers, who waxed rich on her credulity. To one of them, a man named Montara, she gave £300 to lay her claims before Louis XVIII., only to lose sight of both agent and money. To another she gave large sums to collect evidence, with the same result. She saw his face no more. An English refugee, one Driver Cooper, who posed as a lawyer and her friend, imposed so successfully on her that she made him an annual allowance of £1000, more than half her entire income, for services which were worse than useless.

To an article which she inserted in the *Geneva Gazette* describing her parentage and begging for evidence to support her claim she received one interesting answer. A magistrate, M. Cortilly, informed her that he had known L. Chiappini, who had confided to him the story of the exchange. When Cortilly told him that it was his duty to make the matter known, the latter had promised to do so before his death—a promise which, as we know, he kept.

For several years Lady Newborough wandered

over Europe, seeking, always seeking, someone to help her to establish her right to recognition as a royal princess; and everywhere, in Italy, Switzerland, France, she encountered disappointment and became the dupe of swindlers. Once she thought Fortune meant to be kind at last. A young Parisian lawyer, one Alquier Cazem, wrote to inform her that he had made most valuable discoveries and that she must come to Paris at once. She went, and listened to a remarkable story—how the Duke of Orleans wished to come to terms with her; how his mother had, before she died, left a written confession of the fraudulent exchange of children; and much more to a similar effect. All that was necessary was money to have the matter finally arranged. Lady Newborough provided the money, 9000 francs; gave all her precious documents into the rascal's custody; and never saw either lawyer or documents again.

And thus for years she pursued this phantom, which at times was so tantalisingly near and which always eluded her grasp. She squandered money, health and peace of mind in the chase; and tried to find solace for her heartbreaking failure in the contemplation of the lofty position which was hers by right. When at last she despaired of ever reaching her goal, she wrote and published a full statement of her claim and of the wrongs she had suffered, under the title, "Maria Stella, or the exchange of a girl of the most exalted rank for a boy of the lowest condition." The latest reprint of this book contained a publisher's preface, from which the following is an extract:—

"The work which we reprint to-day was origin-



ally an octavo of 250 pages. There were two editions, but it is now impossible to procure a copy. A frightful nightmare to Louis Philippe, the memoirs of Maria Stella were destroyed in a kind of frenzy by the police of the fallen king the very day on which they appeared. It would be hard to show to the world a dramatic story more curious and astonishing to read. Louis Philippe, a child of the lowest of the low, is therein unmasked in a fashion terrible and complete, but with a calmness and dignity which carry conviction. The book is written in letters of fire."

Such was the last fierce, despairing attempt Maria Stella made to vindicate her claim to the rank of a royal princess; and, like all her other efforts, it resulted in failure, and even in ridicule.

From this time she appears to have resigned herself to the inevitable and inexorable. Nursing her grievances, and in vain contemplation of her grandeur, she spent the last thirteen years of her solitary life in her rooms on the ground floor of the Hôtel de Bath in the Rue de Rivoli, surrounded by portraits of the family of Orleans to whom she bore such a strong resemblance. In her windows were transparent sketches of herself and of the members of the Orleans family so displayed that passers-by could note the likeness and pay at least this mute tribute to the justice of her pretensions; while her favourite recreation was the feeding of thousands of sparrows which flocked daily to her open window in homage to the princess of bounty and benevolence.

Thus Lady Newborough closed in tragic loneliness her life of romance, the last years of which

were embittered by an attempt, happily futile, to banish her from France. As she lay dying on the 28th of December 1843 the booming of the cannon which announced the opening of the Chambers roused her from her stupor, and, calling for a newspaper, she whispered that she wanted to know "what that brigand, Louis Philippe, had been saying." These were the last intelligible words she uttered. A few hours later her troubled, fitful life-dream was over.

It is not for me to attempt to solve the problem which so vexed and clouded Maria Stella's life, and which has proved so inscrutable to all later investigation. It is still as impossible to say that she was the daughter of Philippe Egalité as that Louis Philippe was a peasant's son, raised by a cruel fraud to the splendour of a throne.

That Maria Stella was in fact the daughter of the Count and Countess of Joinville cannot, I think, be disputed, in face of the abundance of evidence which makes this conclusion inevitable. She was certainly no child of Chiappini, the constable, whose own children bore no resemblance whatever to the fair, dainty, aristocratic child whom they called sister. On the other hand she was strikingly like Madame Adelaide, and the Duke of Montpensier, children of the Duke of Orleans, for the former of whom she was often mistaken; while her resemblance to the Duke and Duchess, her alleged parents, was equally remarkable.

On the other hand, Louis Philippe, the alleged changeling, was a Chiappini, an almost exact reproduction of the Tuscany constable. In presence, manner and speech he was so much the peasant

that it was the wonder of Europe how he could ever be a king. His boorishness and awkwardness were the ridicule of every Continental court : and these characteristics had been even stronger in his childhood. Madame de Genlis, who was governess to the Duke of Orleans' children, records, "It was necessary for me to cure the Duke of Valois (afterwards Louis Philippe) of many evil forms of speech and of innumerable uncouth ways. His two brothers were quite different to him. The Duke of Montpensier had a natural elegance in his whole form ; and the Count of Beaujolais was charming in face, in mind and in character."

The Count of Joinville's anxiety for a son, instead of a daughter, which was responsible for the desperate expedient of a change of infants, may be explained by the fact that the Countess was very delicate, that she was the sole survivor of seven children who had died in infancy, and that in the event of her death without male issue, the bulk of her large fortune would revert to her own family ; while light is thrown on the difficulty of exchanging Maria Stella, who was born in April 1773, for Louis Philippe, who was ostensibly born in the following October, by the fact that when the latter was brought to the baptismal font those who held him declared that he was as heavy as a child of five months.

## THE FLIGHT OF AN EMPRESS

### A PROPHECY AND ITS TRAGIC FULFILMENT

ONE day in the early sixties of last century two ladies, thickly veiled and disguised, were ushered into the presence of a dervish, at Cairo, famed for his skill in revealing the future; and, to their amazement, were greeted with a profound obeisance and the words: "Welcome, thrice welcome to my humble dwelling, O Empress." "How do you know," demanded the taller and more stately of the ladies, annoyed at the discovery of her identity, "that I am an Empress, and who told you that I was coming here?" "The stars and Mahomet know everything," the dervish answered. "I knew since you arrived in Egypt that you would come to me, and I have waited patiently for you every day."

"It is true," said the lady, "that I am the Empress Eugènie, though no one knows it but my attendant. Tell me what you can of my future and tell me *all*; tell me truly." The dervish, ignoring the jewelled hand held out for his examination, looked piteously at the veiled figure of the Empress, and, in barely audible tones, addressed her thus: "At your birth the stars foretold for you great power and greater sorrow, for your happiness will only be temporary, but your sorrow will last for ever. You are doomed to lose your throne, your

husband and your son, and to wander alone through the world like a lost star. These events, however, will not happen at once, for the blow would kill you. To you, as an Empress, it will not be permitted to enter the land of your husband or your son, except by permission of those you despise. You will have to seek a home with strangers, and the dress of woe will never leave your form; your jewels will be but tear-drops. I have said."

Thus was foretold to the awestruck Empress of the French, in the very zenith of her beauty, her splendour and her power, the tragic destiny that was later to eclipse her life, and to leave her widowed and desolate, to end her days among strangers in a strange land. And it is the dramatic story of the first blow that struck her from her throne and sent her into exile that I propose to tell.

It was early in September 1870 that this blow fell. A report had reached Paris that the glory of France lay smothered in blood on the fatal field of Sedan, that the Emperor was a prisoner, MacMahon killed, and the Prince Imperial lost. Eugénie refused to believe the terrible news. She could not indeed grasp its full horror and significance; but she knew that God could not be so cruel as to overwhelm her and her beloved country in such a calamity as this. As she paced feverishly up and down her boudoir in the Tuileries—the palace which she had entered not so many years earlier a radiantly happy bride—a telegram was placed in her hands. She read it, and sank back with a gasp of horror, half fainting, in her chair.

This was what she read :

“The army is defeated and captive. Having failed to meet death in the midst of my soldiers I have been forced to surrender myself to save the army.—NAPOLEON.”

This, then, was the end of all her glory, of all her dreams of still more splendid triumphs in the future. But, paralysing as the blow was, she must not forget that if she was a woman, with all a woman's weakness, she was also an empress; she must show a brave front to her subjects, though her heart was dead within her. “Keep up your courage,” she telegraphed to her mother in this supreme hour of disaster. “If France wishes to defend herself she has the power. I shall do my duty. Your unhappy daughter.—EUGÈNIE.”

She summoned a Cabinet Council to devise means of defence, but was met with a polite but firm request to resign the throne. “I accept deposition,” she proudly answered, “but I refuse to be a deserter. Let me at least remain in Paris. I care not where I live, or what rank I hold, if only I may share the suffering, the peril, the anguish of our besieged capital.”

But even this modest request was denied to her. As she spoke, Paris was seething with tumult. The Legislative Chamber had been raided by a mob, its President dragged from his chair, the deputies dispersed, and a Republic proclaimed. Thousands of infuriated men and women were pouring through the streets,—from Montmartre, Belleville and Montparnasse—towards the palace, in which the hapless Empress was making her last stand for her husband and her people. Already

the palace was surrounded by them; and their hoarse cries of "Down with the Spaniard! To the guillotine! Long live the Republic!" fell on her ears. She could see them from where she stood—swaying thousands, sweltering in the September sun—"men intoxicated, vociferous, savage; and women, with streaming hair and uplifted arms, waving blood-red flags, drawing closer and closer to the rails of the palace, towards which they turned wild and hungry eyes."

Still, though death encompassed her, the brave woman refused to fly; and it was only when M. Pietri, the Prefect of Police, rushed in crying, "We are lost! The crowds are breaking down the railings," that at last she yielded. "I am determined," she said, "that not one drop of blood shall be shed for me or mine. I will go; but all of you can bear witness that I have done my duty to the last."

Already the crashing of broken glass, the smashing of wood, and the hurried tramp of countless footsteps announced that the mob had broken into the palace. "Come!" cried Count Metternich, "there is barely time to fly"; and, after a hurried farewell to her weeping household, Eugénie took the Austrian Ambassador's arm. Followed by M. Nigra, the Italian Ambassador, and Madame le Breton, one of her ladies, she hastened through the palace galleries, with the growing sounds of tumult and pursuing footsteps in her ears, until the little party emerged on the Place St Germain l'Auxerrois.

So hurried was the Empress's departure that, as one of her sobbing maids exclaimed, "she has gone with not even a pocket-handkerchief." She

had even left behind her the little dressing-bag in which she had packed a few simple belongings: two nightgowns, two pairs of stockings, four handkerchiefs, a pair of boots, two collars and two pairs of cuffs,—such as a Parisian maid-servant might have taken to her first situation; while of all the contents of her wardrobe, said to be worth 4,000,000 francs, not a thing was taken.

When the door of the palace opening on to the Place St Germain was reached the sight that met the royal fugitive's eyes might well have struck terror into the stoutest heart, for the square was black with a seething crowd, crying, "Down with the Spaniard!" "To the guillotine with the Empress!" But never was heart braver than Eugènie's that day. "Do you feel me tremble?" she asked her escort. "Not at all," was the reply. Scarcely, however, had the words left his lips when an urchin, peering up into the veiled face of the Empress, exclaimed, with a jubilant shout, *Voilà l'Impératrice!* It was a crucial moment; in a second the cry would have been taken up and yelled from thousands of throats; but the Chevalier proved equal to the terrible emergency. With marvellous presence of mind he gave the gamin a resounding box on the ear, and seizing hold of him dragged him away, saying angrily, "So, you rascal, you would cry '*Vive les Prusses!*' I will teach you a lesson you won't forget in a hurry," and giving him a sound shaking he handed him over to the mercies of the mob. The danger passed, the Empress and her lady, now separated from their escort, plunged bravely into the crowd, and, forcing



their way through, emerged at last from its fringe, to find a cab providentially at hand.

Jumping into it, they shouted a direction to the driver; and, panting and dishevelled with their exertions, were driven rapidly away to the house of M. Besson, a Councillor of State, in the Boulevard Haussmann, who, they knew, would give them shelter. To their dismay they found that the Councillor was not at home. Returning to their cab they next drove to the house of the Marquis de Piennes in the Avenue de Wagram. Again discomfiture awaited them. The Marquis, too, was away from home.

Their plight was now pitiful. The two friends on whose help they had so confidently relied were not available. They were compelled to dismiss their cabman, as their fare already amounted to three francs, all the money they had brought with them; and they found themselves stranded and penniless. At any moment they might be recognised, and that moment would be the last of their freedom, and possibly of life itself.

Fortunately at this crucial juncture the Empress remembered that a short distance away was the house of Dr Evans, the Court Dentist, on whose devotion to herself and her family she knew she could rely. She would go to him and throw herself on his protection; and with beating hearts she and her companion set forth on foot in the direction of the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. Before they had gone many steps, however, they heard in the distance a tumult of voices and the tramp of thousands of feet coming in their direction. Fear now lent wings to their feet, but the sounds came

nearer and nearer. The crowd was gaining rapidly on them. They must conceal themselves until it had passed; and, diving into a dark recess, they cowered in fear and trembling. A few moments of agonised suspense; the rabble, shrieking, singing and waving red flags swept past, and the sounds died away in the distance.

Once more they were safe—for the time; and, emerging from their hiding-place, they continued their journey in safety until they reached Dr Evans' door. He was at home, the maid said in answer to their inquiry, and the two ladies were shown into his consulting-room, where the dentist soon joined them, horrified to find his beloved Empress in such a pitiful plight, but rejoiced that she had come to him in her trouble. His wife was away at Deauville (a seaside place in Normandy), he said; but, if the Empress was willing, he would do his best to smuggle her out of Paris and escort her to Deauville, from which place she might hope to find her way across the Channel to England and safety. But her Majesty would be wise to spend the night under his roof and take the rest she was so much in need of.

Eugénie gladly assented to the project and to the offer of hospitality, and it was with renewed strength and hopefulness that she and her brave companion awoke the following morning to make the journey on which their lives depended.

When the sun rose on Paris that fateful September morning it was on a city wrapped in seeming peace. The streets, which a few hours earlier had been thronged with bloodthirsty men and shrieking women, were silent and deserted; but the lion was

only slumbering after its orgy—at any moment it might awake, and with its awaking renew the terrors of the previous day. And it was not only in Paris that danger lay; every yard of the long journey to the sea-coast at Deauville was through a country in arms against the reigning house and eager to wreak its vengeance on any of its hapless members who should fall into its hands. And it was with a full knowledge of the thousand perils of the way that Eugènie and her escort left the dentist's friendly house on the journey to the distant Normandy coast.

What if she were detected at the gate itself and not even allowed to leave Paris? The chance of escaping the vigilance of the guard, who knew that the Empress was a fugitive, was of the smallest; and as the carriage approached the city wall Eugènie's heart almost ceased to beat. "Halt!" rang out the summons; the carriage came to a standstill, but before the guard had time to inspect its occupants Dr Evans leaned out and explained that he was taking a mad patient to the Neuilly Asylum and that any excitement would have serious consequences. To the unspeakable relief of the Empress the explanation was considered satisfactory; the guard drew back and the carriage rattled through the gate into the open country, while the Empress, the tension removed, burst into tears.

At every inn at which they stopped to change horses the faithful dentist contrived to disarm suspicion by the same pretext of an insane patient; and at last, after twenty-four hours of suspense too painful for words, the carriage drew up at the apartments of Madame Evans, who gave the Empress

the most cordial of welcomes. So far Eugènie's star had favoured her above all expectations; the sea, beyond which safety lay, was in sight; but the day of danger was by no means over. News of the Empress's escape had already reached Deauville, where, the previous day, crowds of drunken rioters had paraded the streets with cries of "Long live the Republic!" "Down with the Empress!" and although at this early hour of the morning all was peaceful, at any moment the town might awake to fresh scenes of disorder.

As soon as the Empress had been handed over to his wife's custody, Dr Evans proceeded to make inquiries as to what vessels were about to leave Deauville; and, as luck would have it, learnt that the yacht of a well-known Englishman, Sir John Burgoyne, was in the harbour and was to leave that day for England. Nothing could be more fortunate. He promptly sought an interview with Sir John, who, on hearing of the Empress's predicament, undertook to take her with him, a proposal which his lady gladly endorsed. So far, all was clear; but the Empress must not be seen in the streets of Deauville in daylight—the danger of detection was too great. She must wait until the darkness came before she could emerge with safety from her hiding-place; and midnight was the hour arranged for her coming on board the *Gazelle*.

How prudent this precaution was, was proved when, only half-an-hour before midnight, the yacht was boarded and thoroughly searched for the fugitive Empress. The coast was barely clear when she and her companion, thickly veiled and cloaked, made their appearance on the quay, where they

were met by Sir John and conducted on board. It is more easy to imagine than to describe the relief of the two ladies at finding themselves thus safe at last on an English yacht, under the protection of a gallant Englishman, and soothed and ministered to by his gracious lady. The past two days had been a horrible nightmare to them ; and it is little wonder that, in the reaction, as the Empress herself has said, they “ wept like children, tears of gratitude to God for His goodness and of relief from the horrors they had passed through.”

But their safety was even yet by no means as assured as they imagined in the cosy security of the *Gazelle's* cabin. There was still some time to wait for the turn of the tide which was to take them out of the harbour ; and meanwhile a storm was rising. With the dawn angry clouds were seen massed in the sky ; the wind was whistling and shrieking around them as if bent on their destruction, and outside the harbour the white horses were racing viciously. Dare they venture out to sea in such a gale ? Even stout Sir John was full of fears. It seemed madness to leave the harbour ; and yet death was behind—to the ladies to whose safety he had pledged himself—as well as before. At any cost he would venture ; and the little vessel with its precious cargo fared forth on her perilous voyage.

For eighteen hours the *Gazelle* was tossed like a cork on the wild sea, which threatened at any moment to engulf her. So fierce was the storm that even the sailors despaired of seeing land again ; but through it all there was no stouter heart on board than that of the Empress, whose calm courage seemed almost contemptuous of this latest

peril. Sir John never once left the deck during the voyage, and under his skilful handling the gallant little *Gazelle* came safely to her anchorage in Ryde harbour as day was breaking on the 8th of September 1870.

At last the Empress had emerged from the dark hours of danger and trial, and was safe on English soil. After overwhelming her brave rescuer and his wife with her gratitude she made her way to Portsmouth, and a few hours later, at Hastings, was clasping in her arms her beloved boy, the Prince Imperial, who had been smuggled out of France in the blouse and cap of a peasant, and had, by a curious coincidence, reached England on the same day as his mother.

## THE SECRET OF THE IRON CHEST

ONE day in the year 1778 the whole of Sweden abandoned itself to rejoicing. Throughout the whole length of the land the church bells clanged merrily; every village had its festival and its flying flags; every town its feasting, its processions and its fountains running wine. And well might Sweden rejoice and make merry, for had not the Queen at last given birth to an heir to the throne, when all hope of such a happy event had almost been abandoned, and when the glorious line of the Vasas seemed doomed to extinction.

So great was the King's delight that he summoned the Diet to witness his joy, and to ask them, to a man, to stand sponsors to the royal infant; and so great was the pleasure of the Parliament that, without a dissentient voice, they voted 100,000 dollars as a national gift to the Queen and further large sums to defray the expense of the christening and the jubilation. And thus, amid the rejoicings of the whole nation, was cradled Gustavus Adolphus, the most disappointing monarch Sweden ever had, and who probably had no more right to his crown than the meanest of his subjects.

Twelve years earlier Gustavus III., one of the most gifted and brilliant of all the Vasas, had led to the altar his kinswoman, Sophia Magdalena, Princess Royal of Denmark. The bridegroom was a handsome and soldierly man, a born king

of men and of a singular charm ; the bride was one of the fairest and most graceful of European princesses. The union seemed ideal and full of the promise of happiness.

But no sooner had the words of benediction been pronounced than Gustavus in effect renounced his bride. She was his wife in name ; but not in reality. And thus for years was presented to the world the singular spectacle of a king and queen who led divided lives and never even met each other except when occasions of state made their joint presence necessary. What was the cause of this sudden and persistent estrangement it is impossible to say. Its effects, however, were obvious enough ; the nation viewed the situation with alarm and resentment, for there was but one life, that of his childless brother the Duke of Södermanland, between Gustavus and the extinction of his house, and it was a matter of vital necessity that the Queen should provide an heir to the throne.

Thus for eleven years this foolish couple led their separate and estranged lives until an accident, trivial in its nature but far-reaching in its results, revolutionised them completely. One day in 1777 a courier arrived in Stockholm bringing letters to his royal relatives from the King, who was travelling in Finland ; and among these letters was one for the Queen and another for his sister-in-law, the Duchess of Södermanland.

When the Duchess had finished her letter in answer to the King's she ran into the Queen's apartment to tell her that the courier was ready to start on his return journey, and found her Majesty in the act of handing her own reply to one of her



ladies to be copied. "But why," exclaimed the Duchess, "not send it in your own handwriting? I am sure Gustavus would much prefer it to a cold copy." "I always have my letters to the King copied," was her Majesty's answer. "He would only laugh at my bad Swedish." "Well, this time at any rate," retorted the Duchess, "the King is going to read exactly what you write"; and playfully snatching the missive from her Majesty's hand she ran off with it to the waiting messenger.

When the letter reached Gustavus he was delighted and amazed. All the Queen's previous communications had been cold and formal; this was tender and affectionate to such an extent that he exclaimed aloud, "Why, I really believe the Queen loves me after all." It was a revelation to find that the wife who had always seemed so indifferent to him should thus at once develop into a loving, warm-hearted woman! What could be the reason of this sudden and delightful transformation?

The explanation was soon forthcoming. Among his suite to whom he communicated his pleasure was a young noble called Rosenstein who informed him that there was a conspiracy among the Queen's ladies to keep her estranged from her husband; and that chief among these conspirators was a Danish lady in waiting who acted as her Majesty's amanuensis, and who, in copying her Majesty's letters to the King, eliminated every word of affection and made them not only cold but bitter and resentful.

At this discovery Gustavus was furious. He returned post-haste to Stockholm, and had the

matter thoroughly investigated; he compelled the Danish lady to confess the despicable part she had played for so long, and then packed her and her confederates back to Denmark. After eleven years of estrangement and misunderstanding the King and Queen were at last reconciled; from being strangers they became lovers, and so great was the national delight that a service of thanksgiving was held in the church of Riddarholm. A year later this new-found happiness was consummated by the birth of the son and heir whose coming was hailed with such manifestations of joy.

The life of the young heir to the throne of Sweden opened full of promise. As a child he exhibited an intelligence much beyond his years. He was an infant prodigy; so much so that, as a boy of twelve, he turned the tables on his tutors and began to teach and catechise them. One of his professors once humorously remarked to a friend, "I have been summoned to wait on the Crown Prince to receive a lesson in botany from His Royal Highness." Two years later a terrible tragedy placed the crown on the head of this learned and, it is to be feared, priggish youth.

The nobles, who had long been chafing under the yoke of Gustavus III., found in a fanatic named Ankarström a willing tool to rid them of their sovereign. At a masked ball in March 1792 Ankarström stole up behind Gustavus, and fired into his back a pistol loaded with rusty nails. The shot itself would not have proved fatal, but the rust of the nails, by setting up blood-poisoning, achieved the assassin's sinister design.

For several weeks the King lingered in agony before merciful death put an end to his sufferings. Once only was the Queen permitted to enter the death-chamber, and then only for a few moments; while, although the Crown Prince pleaded with tears to be allowed to see his father, all his requests were refused. When the end drew near Gustavus summoned his brother to his presence and instructed him to collect certain papers, to seal them, and to place them in an iron chest.

The chest was then locked under the dying King's eyes, each of its three locks was sealed and the three keys were given into the keeping of the King's brother (the Duke of Södermanland, who was appointed Regent), the Archbishop of Upsala, and the Chancellor, with instructions that the chest should be deposited in the library of the University of Upsala, and its contents should remain undisturbed for fifty years.

Under such circumstances of tragedy and mystery Gustavus III. drew his last breath. Why had he, during his last illness and with death staring him in the face, refused to say a word of farewell to the son who was to succeed him, and to whom he had appeared so devoted? What were the papers which, with such secrecy, he had caused to be placed in the iron chest, which was not to be opened until that son would in all probability be dead? These are the questions which to this day none can answer with certainty; for the chest was not opened at the time stipulated, and still holds its secret inviolate within its iron sides.

. . . . .

If Gustavus III. had been an unsatisfactory

king, his successor proved still more disappointing, for he added to his father's faults a good many vices peculiarly his own. He insulted and estranged his nobles; disgusted his people by his follies and extravagance; and brought his country to the verge of war with almost every nation of Europe. People declared he was mad—that he had inherited all the insanity that ran in the Vasa blood, and certainly his acts lent strong support to the suggestion.

A project to dethrone him and to offer the crown to the Duke of Gloucester, George III.'s half-witted son, only failed because the ministry of the time declined the offer. The Duke was willing, but the Government was not. And when the armies of Russia and Denmark were on the point of invading Sweden more drastic measures were decided on. One day fifty of his officers went to the palace, and after a brief struggle with the King disarmed and made a prisoner of him. His uncle, the Duke of Södermanland, was appointed Regent; and after a few months in gaol the dethroned Gustavus was ignominiously banished from the country to spend the rest of his miserable life an outcast and an obscure wanderer over Europe.

What his ultimate fate was no one knows. More interesting is the story of his birth, the true secret of which still lies hidden in that mysterious chest at Upsala. At last there is a prospect of the mystery of a century or more being cleared up; and meanwhile we may give the solution offered by a manuscript which was written early in the last century by a Dane, who had exceptional

opportunities of learning the secret history of the Swedish Court.

According to this authority the reconciliation between Gustavus III. and his wife, which had caused so much rejoicing, was a pure fiction designed by the King to hoodwink his subjects. Gustavus realised that unless he could provide an heir to the throne his days as monarch were numbered. In order to secure his crown, he arranged that his own marriage should be secretly annulled, and that the Queen should at the same time be married to Count Muncke, one of his courtiers, and an intimate friend of his Majesty. And thus at the very moment when his subjects were offering up thanks to the Almighty for the reconciliation of their Sovereign and his consort, *he was a divorced man and she was actually the wife of another.*

A year later this surreptitious union resulted in the birth of a child, who, as we have seen, was hailed with rejoicing as the heir and successor to Gustavus; and it was this son, who had no drop of Gustavus' blood in his veins, who later wore the crown of Sweden, only to lose it in disgrace, and to spend the rest of his days in obscurity and exile.

If this story be true, much that is mysterious becomes clear. We know why the dying King could find no pleasure in looking once more on the youth who was to succeed him, and who was no son of his; and we know, too, the motive that prompted Gustavus to commit his disgraceful secret to the oblivion of the iron chest, which was not to be opened until it was too late to remedy the wrong he had done to his subjects.

## THE BEAUTIFUL POLE AND THE EMPEROR

IT has been said of the first Napoleon that "while he could face without a tremor a world in arms, he was helpless and undone before the battery of a pair of beautiful eyes." He could crush Europe remorselessly under his heel, and make powerful nations quail and tremble at his coming; and yet his heart was the veriest slave to his passion for beauty, and he would pass from dictating terms to a conquered nation to the writing of rhapsodies such as a lovesick boy might blush to pen.

Of all the fair ones who, in succession, held Napoleon's heart enslaved, probably not one retained her empire so long and firmly as Madame Walewska, who ruled in spite of herself, and whose virtue was the price she paid for her lofty patriotism; and it is the romantic story of this beautiful and unhappy woman which I propose to tell, chiefly from secret sources brought to light by the painstaking research of Mr Frederick Masson.

On the first day of January in the year 1807 the small town of Bronia, between Pulstuck and Warsaw, was crowded with visitors from the Polish capital and from all the district around, wrought to a high pitch of excitement and feverish anticipation; for that day the great Napoleon was to pass through Bronia on his way to Warsaw. He had brought Austria to her knees; Russia was cowering beneath

his lash; and he had made his triumphal way through Prussia, whose vaunted armies had vanished at his approach. By the Poles this man who had terrorised Europe was regarded as their saviour, the man who was to restore the lost glories of the past, and to place them once more among the nations of the world.

When, at last, after hours of waiting, the carriage of the great deliverer rattled into Bronia, the pent-up enthusiasm burst into thunderous shouts of greeting. The crowd swayed and crushed around the carriage which held their hero, and thousands of arms were raised in welcome or in supplication.

“Please let me pass,” exclaimed a sweet pleading voice from the thickest part of the crowd. “Let me see him, if only for a moment.” A way was made for the fair suppliant, and a few moments later a beautiful girl, her blue eyes aflame and her face radiant with enthusiasm, was face to face with the hero she had braved so much to see. “Welcome, thrice welcome to Poland!” she cried to Napoleon, who took off his hat to his unknown admirer. “Nothing we say or do can adequately express our attachment to your person, and our delight in seeing you in the country which looks to you for deliverance.” With a bow and a smile of pleasure Napoleon handed a bouquet to the girl, whose beautiful and gracious words had evidently made a deep impression on him, and said, “Take it as an earnest of my good will. I hope we shall meet again at Warsaw, where I may have the pleasure of hearing your thanks from those beautiful lips.” A moment later the carriage rattled off again, the Emperor waving his hat in farewell to the cheering

multitude and to the lovely girl who had so sweetly voiced its sentiments of loyalty and gratitude.

The fair patriot who had, although she little knew it, entered Napoleon's life was Marie Walewska, the daughter of an impoverished but once great Polish family. One of the six children of a widow, she had grown up to lovely girlhood with two ruling passions,—the love of God and of her oppressed country. Three years before our story opens, when she was but a child of fifteen—the most beautiful girl in all Poland, with blue eyes, a wealth of golden hair, a complexion of dazzling fairness and a figure of exquisite grace—she had been married to one of the wealthiest and most highly born men in Poland, Anastase de Walewice Walewska, a man old enough to be her grandfather, and a year later had borne a son to him, on whom all her passionate love centred. It was for his sake, more than her own, that she looked forward with such passionate longing to the day when her beloved Poland should be snatched from under the feet of her oppressor and should be a great and free nation once more; and it was for the sake of her baby boy that she determined at any cost to seek an interview with Napoleon, on whom all her hopes, and those of her native land, rested. She little dreamt, however, that while pleading thus for Poland, she was placing all she held dearest in life on the altar of her patriotism.

When Madame Walewska returned home from her adventure at Bronia it was with the resolve to keep it secret from her husband and her most intimate friends. It was a treasured and sacred experience, the memory of which she would lock



in her own breast, while she would preserve in secret to her last day the bouquet which the great Emperor had given her. But Napoleon had other designs: he had discovered the identity of the beautiful stranger whose face haunted him to the exclusion of all other thoughts: and not many hours elapsed before Prince Joseph Poniatowski called on her to invite her, by Napoleon's orders, to attend a ball given in his honour.

Madame Walewska was overwhelmed with confusion. Why should the Emperor wish to do her this honour, and how had he discovered her? "That, Madame," protested the Prince, "is his Majesty's affair. I simply obey his instructions in requesting your presence at the ball. It may be that Heaven has marked you out as the means of restoring your country." But to all his pleadings Madame turned a deaf ear. She could not and would not attend the ball; and her decision was final. Scarcely had Poniatowski returned crest-fallen to take her refusal to the Emperor, when one after another the greatest men in Poland presented themselves to entreat her to humour the Emperor; and when their appeals were endorsed by her husband's commands, she was at last compelled to yield.

It was however with trepidation and nervous forebodings of she knew not what, that she prepared for the ordeal. Attired in a simple dress of white satin, and with a wreath of foliage in her hair as her only ornament, she went to the ball, murmurs of admiration following her as she made her way through the reception rooms, to be welcomed with smiles and lavish compliments by Poniatowski. "The Emperor," he said, "has been

expecting you with the utmost impatience. He is overjoyed that you have come; and he bids me to ask your permission to dance with him." "But I do not dance," protested Madame. "I do not wish to dance." "But, Madame," continued the Prince, "the Emperor will be very angry if you refuse: the whole success of the ball depends on you." "I am very sorry," she answered, with a quiver of the lips, "but—but I really cannot—and please ask the Emperor to excuse me."

But already Napoleon was approaching to plead his own cause; and before she realised it he was standing before her as she sat with pale face and downcast eyes, not daring to look up at him. "White upon white is a mistake, Madame," was Napoleon's greeting in a voice that all could hear. Then, stooping, he whispered, "I had hoped for a different reception after——" She neither smiled nor glanced at him; and a moment later he had passed on.

It was with a heavy heart that Madame Walewska returned home that night. She had behaved ill, she knew; but she could not help herself. What did the Emperor mean by these attentions to one so relatively obscure as herself? She did not know what to think of them; but somehow she was afraid of him and did not want to see him again. As such thoughts were passing through her brain in the solitude of her bed-chamber, a knock came at the door and her maid handed her a note which ran thus:

"I saw none but you, I admired none but you; I desire only you. Answer at once and calm the impatient ardour of  
'N.'"

When she had read these passionate words with beating heart and flaming cheeks, she crushed the note fiercely in her hand, and told the waiting-maid that there was "no answer." Her worst fears were confirmed; the Emperor stood unmasked before her, and her anger and indignation that he should dare to treat her so found vent in bitter tears. When she awoke from her troubled sleep the following morning, it was to find her maid standing by her bedside with a second note from Napoleon which she did not deign to open. Enclosing the first note with it, she gave orders that both should be returned to the sender. What could she do in such a dire dilemma was the question that racked her brain. She could not, dared not tell her husband; and she had no other in whom she could confide or who could help her.

Throughout the day a constant succession of visitors called, the members of the Government, the Grand Marshal Duroc—all the greatest in the land—each asking to see her. But to one and all she sent the same answer—she was indisposed and could not see anyone. Her husband, infuriated at such unaccountable conduct, insisted that she should see them, and also that she should appear at the dinner to which Napoleon had invited her.

She could resist no longer. Overwhelmed by arguments and entreaties and even accusations that, if she refused the invitation, she would be accounted a bad patriot, the poor woman at last gave her consent and prepared, as bravely as she could, to face this second and worse ordeal, of the results of which she dreaded even to think. She was given into the charge of Prince Poniatowski's mistress, Madame

de Vauban, to be instructed in Court etiquette and to be advised as to her toilet. To break down the last barriers of her opposition a letter was sent to her, signed by the foremost men of her nation, in which a powerful appeal was made to her love of her country.

One paragraph of this remarkable letter sufficiently indicates its tenor. "Did Esther, think you, give herself to Ahasuerus out of the fulness of her love for him? So great was the terror with which he inspired her that she fainted at the sight of him. We may, therefore, conclude that affection had but little to do with her resolve. She sacrificed her own inclinations to the salvation of her country, and that salvation it was her glory to achieve. May we be enabled to say the same of you, to your glory and our own happiness!"

"Every force," as Mr Masson says, "was now arrayed against her. Her country, her friends, her religion, the Old and New Testament, all conjured her to yield, all combined for the overthrow of a simple and inexperienced girl of eighteen, who felt herself unable to confide in her husband, and had neither parents to counsel nor friends to save her." While these forces were at work, Napoleon was supplementing them by letters of passionate pleading, such as these: "Have I displeased you, Madame? I had hoped otherwise. Was it a delusion on my part? Your ardour has cooled, while mine burns more and more fiercely. You have destroyed my peace! Oh, give some little joy and happiness to the poor heart that longs to worship you!"

As far as the Emperor was concerned, the

dinner, to attend which such overwhelming pressure had been brought to bear upon Madame Walewska, proved less formidable than she had dreaded. On her arrival she was overwhelmed with compliments and flatteries from those who saw in her the saviour of their country, or were anxious to secure the favour of one whom the Emperor held in such high regard. Napoleon's greeting was, in fact, cold and formal. "I heard Madame Walewska was not well. I hope she has recovered," was all he said as he bowed over her hand; but it was observed that during the dinner his eyes were drawn to her as by a magnet, and that his mind was too preoccupied to attend to anyone else. On leaving the table, however, he sought her in the crowd, pressed her hand passionately and, fixing eyes of adoration on her, whispered in her ear, "No, no! with those soft sweet eyes, that gentle expression, you cannot be inflexible; you cannot delight in torturing me, unless you are the most heartless of coquettes, the cruellest of women."

When the men had retired, she was carried off by Madame de Vauban; the lady guests crowded around her full of flatteries. "He never even saw any of us," they declared; "his eyes were all for you. They flashed fire as he looked on you." "You have conquered his heart, and you can do as you will with him. The salvation of Poland is in your keeping." Scorn their flatteries as she might, the appeal to her patriotism was stronger than even she realised. Could it be that she was destined to save her beloved country, the most cherished ambition of her life? It was a dazzling almost irresistible prospect. But at what a cost!

—the cost of all a good woman holds dearest, dearer far than life itself!

While such thoughts as these were filling her mind, Duroc entered, and placing a letter from his master in her lap began to plead his cause with all the eloquence of which he was such a master. “Can you,” he asked, “repulse him who has never brooked a refusal? Ah, the lustre of his glory is dimmed by sorrow which you might brighten, if you would, by a few hours of happiness.” In this strain of appeal to her pity he continued until she burst into tears and sobbed as if her heart would break.

When at last Duroc left her, subdued as he thought, she opened the letter which lay on her lap and read thus:

“There are times when all splendours become oppressive, as I feel but too deeply at the present moment. How can I satisfy the desires of a heart that yearns to cast itself at your feet, when its impulses are checked at every point by considerations of the highest moment? Oh, if you would, you alone might overcome the obstacles that keep us apart. My friend, Duroc, will make all easy for you. Oh! come, come! your every wish shall be gratified! Your country will be dearer to me when you take pity on my poor heart. ‘N.’”

There seemed to be no escape. Napoleon himself endorsed the assurance of her compatriots that the fate of Poland depended on her. She saw in a moment’s ecstatic vision her dear country once more reunited, regenerated, free—restored to its old-time splendour—and all as a result of her own act—her own sacrifice. Ah, that was the

word that obscured this dazzling vision and brought her back to a cruel realisation of her pitiful plight. Could she pay the price, the terrible price that was asked of her patriotism? Must Poland be redeemed at the cost of dishonour, her own dishonour? The struggle was long, agonising; but the barriers of her resistance had been so weakened that they could not withstand many more assaults. She would meet Napoleon alone. She would tell him that she did not, could not, return his love, and would plead with him, as a man of honour, to spare her and yet save her country.

The hours that separated her from this dreaded interview were spent in silent, ever-increasing terror. But the inexorable clock on which her eyes were fixed ticked on remorselessly. At half-past ten there was a knock; a cloak was thrown round her, a hat with a thick veil was placed on her head, and she was led half fainting to the street, where a carriage awaited her. She was driven through the darkness to a secret entrance to the palace; and was half led, half carried to a door which was eagerly thrown open by someone within. She was placed in an arm-chair—and found herself in Napoleon's presence.

Through her streaming eyes she saw the Emperor kneeling at her feet, and soothing, reassuring words fell unheard on her ears. A reference to her "old husband," however, restored her dazed senses; and springing up in alarm she tried to escape, only to be brought back firmly but kindly and replaced in the chair. In vain did Napoleon press his suit, and seek to remove her objections. She could not really love her husband, he said, who

was so much older than herself; the union was repulsive, opposed to nature and could not be held binding. He would give her in its place such love as she had never dreamt of, rank and power which would place her among the greatest of the earth; and further, for her sake he would restore Poland to its old grandeur.

The hours passed, and she showed no signs of yielding—her only answer was tears. At two o'clock there was a knock at the door. "What, already!" Napoleon exclaimed. "Well, my pretty, plaintive dove, go and rest. You must not fear the eagle; the only power he claims over you is that of a passionate love, a love that will be satisfied with nothing short of your whole heart. You will love him in time, for in all things you shall command him; in *all* things, do you hear?" Wrapping her cloak around her he led her to the door, vowing, however, that he would not open it until she consented to see him the next day—a consent which she tearfully gave as the price of her escape.

On the following morning her maid was at her bedside with a letter, a bouquet of beautiful flowers, and several morocco cases, which, on being opened by the maid, revealed diamond ornaments of exquisite brilliance and beauty. When Madame Walewska saw the gems blazing with the splendour of the morning sun, she snatched them from the maid's hands and flung them across the room, ordering that they should be taken back without a moment's delay. The letter, which she read, ran thus (I quote Mr Masson): "Marie, my sweet Marie, my first thought is of you, my first desire to



see you again. You will come, will you not? You promised. If you fail, the eagle will fly to you himself. I shall see you at dinner, my friends tell me. Deign to accept this bouquet. Let it be a secret link binding us to each other in the midst of the crowd. It will enable us to communicate under the very eyes of the multitude. When I press my hand upon my heart, you will know that it is dreaming of you. Touch your bouquet in reply. Love me, my Marie, and keep your hand constantly on your bouquet.”

Realising that it would be both foolish and futile to resist, Madame Walewska attended the dinner, but refused to take with her the bouquet which Napoleon had designed as “a secret link” between them. He greeted her with a frown of displeasure, due no doubt to the absence of the bouquet, and throughout the meal seems scarcely to have addressed a word to her. He had, however, an able and zealous deputy in his Grand Marshal, who sat next to Madame, and who pleaded his cause more ardently than ever, exacting a promise that she would visit Napoleon again that evening.

It was with a lighter heart this time that Madame allowed herself to be conducted to the Emperor’s presence. He had been gentle and considerate to her on her last visit; she was no longer afraid of violence at any rate, and she trusted to his honour and to her pleadings for her protection. Napoleon, however, was in an unamiable mood at this second meeting. “I had hardly hoped to see you again,” was his brusque greeting before proceeding to demand why she treated him so cruelly. Why had she refused his diamonds and his flowers? Why

had she so studiously avoided his eyes during dinner? Her continued coldness was an insult which he would not brook.

“But, Madame,” he continued, raising his voice in anger, “I would have you know that I mean to conquer you. You *shall*, yes, I repeat it, you *shall* love me. I have restored the name of your country. It owes its very existence to me! I will do more than this for it. Look at this watch in my hand. Just as I dash it to fragments before you, so will I shatter Poland and all your hopes if you drive me to desperation by rejecting my heart, and refusing me yours.” And hurling the watch against the opposite wall with terrific force, it was shattered to fragments.

At this terrific outburst of wrath, before which the strongest man in Europe might well have quailed, Madame Walewska fell senseless on the floor; and when she came to consciousness again it was to find Napoleon, the terrible, wiping the tears from her eyes with the tenderness of a woman.

The long fight was at last over. Napoleon had conquered; and Madame Walewska resigned herself to her fate, consoling herself as best she could with the thought that all she counted dearest in life was a sacrifice to Poland's salvation. Day after day she visited the Emperor and endured his caresses and endearments, her coolness adding fuel to the fire that consumed him. Her husband abandoned her, but she became the heroine of Poland, which counted her lapse from virtue her greatest honour. In her, her compatriots saw not the frail minister to an Emperor's vice, but the true

wife of his heart, who would make him love Poland for her sake and restore its vanished greatness.

No husband, indeed, could have been more devoted to his wife than Napoleon to Madame Walewska. He was not happy away from her, and spent every possible moment in her company. She was the most honoured guest at every dinner and *fête*, and his attentions to her fell little short of idolatry. But she was not long in realising that the sacrifice had been in vain. He was lavish of promises, but performance failed; and even promises soon gave way to excuses. "I love your country," he would say, "and I am willing to second its efforts and maintain its rights. But—my first duty is to France. I cannot shed French blood in a foreign cause." And thus she saw that the great dream of her life was not destined to be realised through her.

There is little doubt, however, that she had now grown to love Napoleon for his own sake. Indeed it would have been difficult for any woman to resist long such ardour as his. To see the world's conqueror at her feet, a humble suppliant for her smiles, was to appeal irresistibly to the coldest heart of woman, and Madame Walewska was no iceberg. "It is my great privilege," he once said to her, "to lead nations. Once I was an acorn; now I am an oak. Yet when I am the oak to all others I am proud to become the acorn for you. And when we are surrounded by a curious crowd, how can I say 'Marie, I love you!' Whenever I look at you, I die to say it, but I could not whisper it in your ear without a loss of dignity."

Her happiest days were probably those spent at

Finckenstein, away from the pomp and glitter of the Court. Here she was Napoleon's only companion; she had her meals alone with him, spent long hours *tête-à-tête* with him, and grew to love the strong man who was glad to be her slave. When, however, he asked her to accompany him to Paris, she at first declined to go. She fully realised then how complete her failure had been; to accompany him to Paris would do nothing to advance the cause she had so much at heart. But again his pleadings prevailed. "I know," he said, "you can live without me. But though you have never really given me your heart, you cannot deprive me of a few minutes of happiness each day by your side. None but you can give me such moments; and yet" (in a tone of infinite sadness) "men call me the most favoured of human beings."

To Paris, accordingly, she went, and two years later gave birth to a son, whom she called Alexander Florian Joseph Colonna Walewska. All the world of Paris was eager to pay homage to the Emperor's favourite, but Madame Walewska would have none of its adulation. She preferred to lead the quietest of lives in her pretty little house in the Chaussée D'Antin or the Rue du Houssaye, to which Napoleon loved to escape to spend his scanty leisure in her company. Every day he sent her some token of his love, and ministered to her pleasure in every possible way. The rich promise of her girlish beauty had been more than realised; and in the brighter life of Paris she discarded her sober dresses of grey and black for gayer robes. "Thus," says Masson, "she ordered dresses of lilac silk, of white tulle with three rows of acacia, of white

tulle powdered with rose petals, or gowns of blue and white, her national colours ; a dress of shot taffetas, in blue and white ; a dress of blue tulle, trimmed with white heather and daisies."

Thus she remained loyal to Napoleon to the last days of his splendour ; and even in his days of exile and shattered fortunes she travelled to Elba to try to console him. After his banishment to St Helena and the death of M. de Walewska she found a second husband in General Count d'Ornano, a cousin of the Emperor, and a distinguished soldier, an alliance, the news of which affected her exiled lover deeply. It was a bitter thought to him that the woman whom he had loved so long and truly should thus fail in loyalty in his hour of eclipse.

But Madame Walewska's new happiness, if happiness it was, was short lived. After giving birth to a child, she died at Paris one December day in 1817, the word " Napoleon " on her lips.

## A PALACE TRAGEDY

“HE will have a far more turbulent reign than his father, will marry a woman from the people and, in his twenty-seventh year, will cease to be King, his dynasty perishing with him.”

These prophetic words, spoken by an inspired peasant long years earlier, probably occurred to many as they listened to the jubilant clashing of bells and the boom of cannon which, one August day in the year 1876, sent the news flying through Belgrade that an heir was born to the throne of Servia. And seldom has a royal infant been cradled under darker auspices; for Servia at the time was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Turkey, and on distant battlefields the joy bells of Belgrade were answered by the rattle of muskets and the din of death-dealing cannon. At home poverty, discontent and intrigue were rampant everywhere; while the King and Queen were quarrelling fiercely over the very cradle of their new-born infant.

But fierce as were the quarrels of Milan and Nathalie even at this early stage of their wedded life, they were equally devoted to their child Alexander, who, indeed, seemed born to win all hearts. He inherited much of his mother's beauty and winsomeness. Handsome and intelligent beyond most children, he grew up wayward and self-willed. Of the boy's self-importance some amusing stories are told. On one occasion when

King Milan was addressing the Shupshtina at some length, the little Crown Prince, wearying of his father's long-winded oratory, called one of the Court officials to him and whispered, "Tell papa he is talking too much and that he must come home at once; I want him." On another occasion, when the crowds on the landing-stage at Shabats greeted him with wild enthusiasm, he asked an attendant why they made such a noise on seeing him. "Because they love you," was the answer. "They say you love me," he called out to the people in his childish voice. "If that is true, prove it to me by throwing your hats into the water." In an instant hundreds of hats were flung into the air and were swept away by the waters of the Save.

That he could also be as generous as he was wilful is proved by the following story. One day when he was walking in Belgrade with his tutor he passed a bourgeois minister whom he disliked. "I am so short-sighted," he said to his companion, "that, whenever I see that man, I mistake him for a lackey." "You should not say that," answered the tutor. "Your Highness should remember that he deserves great credit for raising himself from the humble position in which he was born, and that, moreover, your own ancestors were swineherds at one time." Alexander was silent for a few moments under the rebuke; and then, impulsively grasping his tutor's hand, he exclaimed, "Forgive me. I am sorry I was so unkind."

Such was Alexander, wayward and winsome, autocratic and generous, when his father's abdication raised him to the throne of Servia a few weeks before he reached his thirteenth birthday. On the

evening before Milan's abdication, says Mr Herbert Vaughan, Alexander came to say "good-night" as usual. His father held him by the hand and looked long into his eyes. "Sasha," he said, "what will you do when you are King?" The boy returned his gaze and seemed a little troubled, but made no answer. Early next day Milan came into his son's room and exclaimed, with an affectation of merriment, "Good-morning, your Majesty!" Alexander returned the greeting solemnly, but without any appearance of surprise or emotion. "How did you know?" Milan asked sharply. "Who has told you that you are now the King?" "No one," was the quiet reply; "but I guessed from your question last night that you intended to make me King to-day." A few hours later ex-King Milan was taking the oath of allegiance to his little son; cannons were booming and the streets of Belgrade were full of cries of "Long live Alexander!" in greeting to the boy who was thus suddenly and dramatically called to reign over them,—none dreaming in that hour of general rejoicing of the terrible tragedy that was to close his life before many years had gone.

When one considers the conditions under which the King had spent his boyhood the wonder is that his character was not more ill-regulated than it was. His father, who worshipped him, was now an exile forbidden to set foot in Servia; his mother, who was also passionately devoted to her son, was not allowed to speak to him. "The Regents," we are told, "allowed no scope to his affectionate sentiments; no friends of his own age, no tutor who had the qualities requisite to direct his heart or



mind. They wanted to bring him up for themselves. A man slept on the mat outside his apartments. He lay down at eight in the evening and rose at five—the same hour as the King. He had orders to let nobody in after ten, and to take the name of everyone who entered before that hour.”

But although Alexander was thus severed from companionship and sympathy, practically a prisoner in his own palace, he grew up skilled in many accomplishments. He became a fine horseman, was as much at home in the water as a fish, excelled in athletic games, and did not seem to know what fear was. He also developed a sense of duty and a resolute will which surprised all who had known him as a boy. “Nathalie’s Sasha, whom I often meet at Vienna or Wiesbaden,” says one who knew the King well, “is a quiet, prematurely grave young man who has developed both bodily and mentally in a very sudden manner. No one would believe that he is only nineteen. His manners are amiable; he meets you half way. He has a friendly shake of the hand for those he knows, but what he really thinks lies buried deep in his heart, and no one of his *entourage* has been allowed access to this secret chamber.”

Alexander had not been long on the throne of Servia before he gave a startling evidence of his new-born strength of character. He had borne the tyranny of his Regents so uncomplainingly that they, not unnaturally, regarded him as a mere puppet in their hands. How great this tyranny was is shown by one phase of it. Although Queen Nathalie was in Belgrade, where she made her home in a modest house in its main street,

Teratsia, she was not permitted even to approach the palace, whose gates were closed against her. For nine months she never caught a glimpse of her son except when he rode or drove past her house in the company of his courtiers ; and when she ventured to complain of this treatment to Ritsch, one of the Regents, she received for answer a letter full of the most vulgar abuse.

One day Alexander invited the Regents and his principal ministers to dine at the palace. Half way through the meal he rose from the table and, in a strong, clear voice, thanked his guests for their services to him and requested them to sign their acts of abdication. "From this moment," he concluded, "there shall be no will in Servia but *mine*, and my commands must be obeyed. Gentlemen, for this night you remain my prisoners." As he sat down, the folding-doors were flung open and revealed ranks of soldiers with glittering bayonets. In vain did the Regents and ministers bluster and fume ; refusing to go to the rooms that had been prepared for them in the palace, they were locked up all night in the dining-room ; and the following morning the King's proclamation of his independence was hailed with rejoicing throughout Servia. Alexander had at last won his emancipation.

At the time of her son's *coup d'état* Queen Nathalie was living quietly at the Villa Sashino near Biarritz, and it was while on a visit to her that Alexander met and succumbed to the fascinations of Draga Maschin, one of his mother's attendants and the most beautiful woman in Servia. One day when bathing, so the story goes, the King appeared to be in danger of drowning. Draga,

who, arrayed in a charming bathing costume, was standing on the beach watching the swimmers, saw the King's danger and gallantly swam out to his rescue, nearly losing her own life in her heroic effort to save that of the King. Such an evidence of courage and loyalty, especially when allied to so much beauty, could scarcely fail to make a deep impression on Alexander's heart, and it was not long before he was hopelessly in love with the fair heroine.

Draga Maschin, who had come thus dramatically into the young King's life, was a widow about nine years his senior. With exquisitely cut, delicate features, illumined with large dark eyes which could melt with tenderness or flash with flame, with a brilliant complexion, long and luxuriant hair and a figure divinely moulded, Draga was one of those women of whom poets rave and artists despair—a woman born to conquest and the homage of men. Although she was of no exalted birth she had good blood in her veins; for she was granddaughter of that Nikola Lunyevitza who was "adopted brother" and the most trusted friend of Prince Milosh Obrenovitch I., Alexander's royal predecessor. As a girl she had been led to the altar by a Bohemian engineer, a man of dissolute life, who, after a few years of wedded misery, left her a widow with an income of less than three pounds a month. For a time she lived in obscure lodgings in Belgrade, where her chief pleasure was in attending the weekly meetings of a choral society. "There the future Queen of Servia might have been seen seated on a wooden bench with the arm of a forester or a tradesman round her

waist singing the old melancholy Servian songs." It was at this period of her life that Draga, in the very prime of her beauty and in her condition of pathetic poverty, came under the notice of Nathalie, who, fascinated by her charms, chose her as lady in waiting, little dreaming of the tragic consequences that were to follow the choice.

The days at Biarritz which followed the romantic introduction of Alexander to Draga Maschin were days of unclouded happiness for the boy monarch. Thrown hourly into the company of this beautiful widow, full of sympathy and no doubt exercising all her arts of fascination on him, he became a slave to her slightest wish. So great her influence became that before long ministers began to complain that the King would do nothing without consulting her. If any important question arose at a council, he would make an excuse and rush off to the telephone to ask her advice, on which alone he would act.

But dazzling as was the prospect which now opened before Draga she seemed, for a time at least, to shrink from it. When one of her friends, a lady in waiting, who had noticed the King's infatuation, suggested this prospect of a throne, Draga was furious. "What do you mean," she exclaimed, flushing with anger, "by talking such nonsense? What do you take me for? Of course 'Sasha' loves me. I know it, and am proud and happy in the knowledge; and I—I adore him. But do not imagine that I shall ever for a moment stand between him and his duty. He must marry a foreign Princess, who will bring him powerful connections and riches, and I am content

to sacrifice my own happiness in order to secure his."

These were brave, unselfish words, and doubtless Draga meant all she said. But when it becomes a duel between love and duty, how often the former proves the stronger! And so it was with fair, if frail, Draga Maschin. For three long years, it is said, she resisted Alexander's solicitations—refused point-blank to be his bride, although that meant to wear a crown among the queens of the world. Curious stories are told of his passion and her opposition—how he would spend hours under her window imploring her to open the door and let him in, if only to lie a while at her feet, and how she turned a deaf ear to all his pleading. And there were not wanting envious tongues to declare that the widow administered love potions to the "silly boy," to strengthen the spell she had cast over him.

For long, Nathalie, the Queen-Mother, was blind to her son's infatuation for her pretty *dame d'honneur*. It was only a boy's passing foolishness, she thought, and meanwhile Sasha was amusing himself. But when one day she discovered a letter full of passionate devotion addressed by her son to Draga, all the mother in her rose in arms against the woman who had stolen away the one heart which was left to her. Months earlier a Paris clairvoyante had told Nathalie, "Your Majesty is cherishing in your bosom a poisonous snake which one day will give you a mortal wound." And now, with this tell-tale letter in her hand, she knew how true was the clairvoyante's statement, at which she had smiled so incredulously at the time. Draga was a

dangerous woman, she must go, and within an hour she was dismissed from Sashino in disgrace.

If Nathalie had wished to drive Draga into her son's arms she could not have done anything more effectual. The moment the King heard of the fate of his love he hastened to her side, to comfort and console her, and to win her consent, at last, to share his life. "As my wife, and only as my wife," he protested to the yielding woman, "you will be safe from such insults. Give me the right to shield you, Draga, my beloved, and I will count life itself well lost in such happiness." What could Draga do but consent? And from that moment of supreme bliss and pregnant doom the fate of both was irrevocably sealed.

In vain did Alexander's ministers protest against such a calamitous folly as his proposed marriage to Draga. "There is," he retorted excitedly, "but one woman in the whole world for me, one whom I love more than all else, much more than my crown. She alone can make me forget the bitterness of my past and make me happy. And, cost what it may, this woman, my good angel, I mean to make my wife." And thus it came to pass that Draga, the penniless widow of the mining engineer, became Queen of Servia, and mistress of her royal consort's fate.

When news of his son's proposed marriage reached his father in Paris, Milan was furious. "It is fearful—terrible!" he exclaimed in his rage. "Who can understand it? Who could have conceived it? The Servians are a contemptible lot if they accept that creature for their Queen. And this is the act of Sasha—of my own son! He is a

monster—a thing of evil in the eyes of all men. I have known always that, should he fall into the hands of a bad woman, all was lost. . . . The dynasty is for ever disgraced; the Montenegrins and Peter Karageorgevitch will dance for joy; their game is played for them. It is all over with the Obrenovie!”

How true these prophetic words were was proved only too soon. Draga's elevation to the throne of Serbia was the signal for the floodgates of suspicion, jealousy and hatred to be opened against her. She could do nothing right; her husband's slavish devotion was turned into a powerful weapon against her; she became the object of every kind of base scandal; grotesque stories were told of her vanity, her superior airs, and her extravagance; and her crowning offence was in failing to provide an heir to the throne and in putting forward her own brother as heir-apparent. This last unfortunate act was, no doubt, the immediate cause of the ghastly deed perpetrated at the Castle of Belgrade, the news of which sent such a thrill of horror through the civilised world.

The last scene of this royal tragedy opens in the early hours of a June day in 1902. Alexander and Draga had retired to rest, and in spite of their fears (for they had received more than one warning of the terrible fate that was hanging over them) had fallen asleep. Silence brooded over the palace, which was already environed with death; for the conspirators had drawn around it a ring of soldiers, so that they might execute their work of assassination undisturbed.

A number of officers, mad with drink and the lust of blood, made their way into the palace through a back entrance, the gates of which were unlocked by an officer of the guards who had been won over; and, shooting down remorselessly the loyal sentinels who tried to bar the way, poured up the stairs to the door of the chamber behind which the King and Queen, roused from their sleep by the shots and commotion, were standing, clinging to each other with beating hearts. In vain did Captain Kostich of the Royal Bodyguard try to restrain the assassins. An axe was called for, and heavy blows began to rain on the door which separated them from their prey. "Swear that you will spare the King's life and I will ask him to open to you," at last exclaimed Kostich, realising that resistance and pleading were alike hopeless. And when a few of the conspirators assented he shouted, "Open, Sire, open! Here are your officers; they will do you no harm." Scarcely had the words left his lips when the door was opened and the murderers found themselves face to face with their King and Queen, pale and half clad as if they had but just left their bed, but as regally calm and dignified as if they were holding a reception.

Leaving the Queen's side Alexander walked towards his enemies and in dignified tones asked, "What do you want of me at this hour? Is this an evidence of your fidelity to your King?" For a few moments the officers stood silent and abashed in the presence of their Sovereign and victim. Then a lieutenant, more daring than his fellows, called out, "What are you standing gazing at?"



This is how *I* show my fidelity"; and raising his revolver he fired point-blank at the King, who fell wounded into Draga's arms.

As if this shot had been the signal, the fiendish passions of the officers were let loose. Quick as lightning a volley of shots rang out; the King and Queen fell to the floor; and, as they lay, were riddled with a fusillade of bullets. The conspirators now drew their swords and slashed at their writhing victims with fiendish ferocity, mutilating them in indescribable ways, and emitting frenzied shouts as the work of butchery proceeded.

"Out of the window with them!" shouted Colonel M—— when at last it seemed impossible that the least spark of life could linger. "To the dogs with the carrion!" Draga's mutilated body was first seized and flung out of the window into the garden below; and the group of officers followed with Alexander. But there was still life left in the King; as he was raised to the window-ledge his fingers convulsively clutched at the framework, and only released their hold when an officer's sword slashed furiously at them. The body was then hurled out amid loud cries of "Long live King Peter!" "Long live King Peter!" thundered back the soldiers massed in the palace grounds below, and for several minutes the air was rent with cries of jubilation over a tragedy which might well have made the angels weep.

For two hours the bodies of the murdered Sovereigns lay in the garden, an object of derision to the soldiery, until the Russian Minister Tcharikoff begged the leader of the conspirators (who was none other than Colonel Maschin,

Draga's brother-in-law) to remove them inside the palace, and not leave them in the rain, which had now begun to fall heavily, exposed to the public gaze. Two bed-sheets were accordingly brought and the bodies of Alexander and Draga were carried to a room on the ground floor of the palace.

Meanwhile, within the palace, pandemonium reigned. The murderers, having accomplished their chief object, were seized with a sort of frenzy. "They screamed," says Chedo Mijatovich, "and shouted at the top of their voices, dancing and running about the rooms like madmen, firing their revolvers at the pictures on the walls, at looking-glasses and candelabras; they broke with axes the bedstead of the royal couple, and smashed all the fine things on the Queen's toilet-table; called for wine from the King's cellars and the trembling servants obeyed their orders."

But even yet their lust for destruction was not sated. Before day dawned several of the late King's loyal ministers and officers had been treacherously shot in cold blood, including Queen Draga's two young brothers, who died side by side, facing without a tremor the rifles of their assassins. And it was not until the Austro-Hungarian Minister threatened that, unless the slaughter ceased at once, the Austrian army would occupy Belgrade, that this night of horrors came to an end.

Thus perished in the twenty-seventh year of his life, as the peasant prophet had foretold, King Alexander of Serbia and his beautiful queen, whose love, while it had crowned his last years with happiness, had brought on him and on her the most terrible fate that ever closed a dynasty in tragedy.

## THE CARDINAL'S NIECE

“Do you see those girls?” Madame de Villeroi said to Gaston d’Orleans, pointing to a small group of bright-eyed, laughing maidens, the centre of an admiring crowd of Louis XIV.’s courtiers in the Palais Royal. “They are poor enough now; but they will soon have splendid châteaux, large incomes, magnificent jewels and perhaps great dignities.” And seldom has a prophecy been more literally fulfilled; for the girls, whose charm and beauty were winning the homage of Louis’ proudest subjects, were the nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, who were destined in the years to come to shine among the brightest stars in the social firmament of Europe. Three of them were to wear the coronet of a duchess; one, to dazzle the world as Comtesse de Soissons; and the fifth to become the wife of Constable Colonna, one of the greatest nobles of Italy.

When Mazarin had established himself on his pedestal as the most powerful and wealthy man in France, and as the lover (some say the husband) of Queen Anne of Austria, he had sent to Italy for his five pretty nieces, the daughters of his widowed sister, Signora Mancini, to bask in the splendour of his protection and, by the alliances he would provide for them, to extend his influence and strengthen his position.

As the *protégées* of the all-powerful Cardinal

they had been received at the French Court with open arms; the Queen herself petted them as if they had been her own children; they were the favourite playmates of the young King Louis XIV., and his brother the little Duc d'Anjou; and, from the most high-placed courtier to the meanest palace servant, all conspired to surround them with flattery and attentions.

Beautiful, without exception, as the Cardinal's nieces were, the most lovely and winsome of them all, by common consent, was Hortense, who quickly installed herself as prime favourite with her uncle, whom she alone, in all France, could metaphorically "twist round her thumb." As a child of ten her letters to the Cardinal display all the arts of a born courtier and coquette.

"I am transported," she writes after she has succeeded in wheedling a handsome present out of him, "to find that you have done your little Hortense the honour to think of her. Monseigneur de Coutances will be able to express to you my joy, and especially when he gave me the present on your behalf. I believed that it was true what he told me, that you always love me a little. It is that which makes me pray with all my heart that you may have the kindness to continue that favour. May God preserve you in health, the while I shall strive to do everything possible not to be unworthy of the quality of your very humble and obedient niece and servant, who loves you with all her heart,

"HORTENSE DE MANCINI."

Even at this early age the precocious and fascinating Hortense was beginning to play havoc with men's hearts. Armande de la Porte, only son of

the Maréchal de la Meilleraye, fell a hopeless victim to the charms of this coquette of ten summers and vowed that if he could not marry her he would forswear the world and spend the rest of his days in a convent. "If I can only marry her," the love-sick youth declared, "I do not care if I die three months later." And no doubt he meant it. But alas! for his dreams. The Cardinal frowned on his suit and laughed at his protestations. "I would rather give Hortense to a lackey," he declared, "than allow him to marry her."

Even the Duke of Savoy, Charles Emanuel, fared no better. He came to Paris to woo no less exalted a lady than *Mademoiselle*, the King's sister, but the moment he set eyes on Hortense he had not a glance to spare for the princess. He must have Hortense or no other; and his suit might have prospered, for even Mazarin could look for no more exalted husband for his favourite niece, had he not made stipulations to which the Cardinal could not consent. Thus early, before even the little witch had reached her teens, she had been wooed by lovers in whose eyes the fairest and noblest young ladies in France might have been proud to find favour.

Even Louis himself and his brother, the Duc d'Anjou, had neither the power nor the wish to resist her charms. She coquetted with both, and brought both to her feet, and might, had she so desired, have chosen which she would wed; at least until Louis, despairing of winning her, turned for consolation to her less beautiful, but more pliant, sister Marie.

As Hortense grew to young womanhood her

childish promise of a rare beauty was more than fulfilled. Her charms, when her beauty was at its zenith, have been thus catalogued by Saint-Evremond, one of her greatest admirers and her loyal friend to the last. "The colour of her eyes has no name, it is neither blue, nor grey, nor altogether black, but a combination of all the three; they have the sweetness of blue, the gaiety of grey, and above all, the fire of the black. There are none so sweet in the world. Her smile would soften the hardest heart. Her nose gives a noble and lofty air to her whole physiognomy. The tone of her voice is so harmonious and agreeable that none can hear her speak without being sensibly moved. Her complexion is so delicately clear that I cannot believe that anyone who examined it closely can deny it to be whiter than the driven snow. Her hair is of a glossy black, whose curls seem to rejoice to shade so lovely a head." Such, as far as words can convey a picture of a beauty which Saint-Evremond himself declared was "indescribable," was Hortense de Mancini in the flower of her early womanhood, the most peerless gem of female loveliness in Europe.

Never was maiden more besieged with lovers than this supremely beautiful niece of the Cardinal; but though her heart was, no doubt, touched by more than one of them, Mazarin was hard to please and promptly sent them one and all about their business, although among them were two who were destined to wear crowns—Pedro II. of Portugal, and Charles II. of England. Charles, to whom his crown had not yet fallen, saw in Hortense not only the hope of winning the most beautiful consort in

Europe, but the means—since it was an open secret that she would inherit the bulk of her uncle's enormous riches—of replenishing his empty coffers. It is, indeed, very possible that Hortense might have worn the crown of England's queen had the Cardinal foreseen that Charles would so soon come to his kingdom, and if he had not been so fearful of offending the Government then in power. As things were, he preferred to decline the honour proposed for his niece. Not many months later, when the discarded wooer had recovered his throne, Mazarin sent Bartet post-haste to England to offer him Hortense as bride and a dowry of 5,000,000 livres with her ; but the offer came too late. Charles, as King, politely declined what, as an exile, he had solicited so humbly.

But Mazarin's days were now drawing to their close, and he realised the urgent importance of finding a husband for his favourite niece, who was to inherit most of his wealth. There was no lack of choice ; but, for different reasons, one after another was dismissed as ineligible, until, by a curious irony of fate, he found the list reduced to the Marquis Meilleraye, the very man whose suit he had so contemptuously rejected a few years earlier, but who had still remained loyal to Hortense. On his deathbed he consented to the alliance ; persuaded the King to create Meilleraye Duc de Mazarin ; and, having thus at last provided his niece with a protector, breathed his last. " In an adjoining room," says Hortense, " my brother and sister looked at one another, and, for all regret, observed, ' God be thanked ; he has gone ! ' And to tell the truth, I was scarcely more grieved ! " So much for gratitude.

A few days later, Hortense received from her husband-elect "a great cabinet, wherein, among other rich gifts, there were ten thousand pistoles in gold." A great part of the gold she gave away to her brothers and sisters; the rest she threw out of a window of the Palais Mazarin "to have the pleasure of seeing a crowd of servants which was in the court scramble and fight for the coins."

It was a very richly dowered bride that the new-fledged Duc de Mazarin led to the altar; for of her uncle's vast wealth her share was at least the equivalent of £5,000,000 in addition to the greater part of the Palais Mazarin with its priceless contents; but few brides have ever entered on a less happy wedded life. The Duc de Mazarin was not only one of the most ill-favoured men in France ("he bore on his face," says Madame Sevigné, "the justification of his wife's conduct") but he was eccentric to the verge of insanity. He alternated between fits of mad jealousy and morbid religious fervour. With a hammer in one hand and a paint-pot in the other he made a tour of the Mazarin galleries, with their costly art treasures, demolishing statues and smearing pictures which failed to satisfy his ridiculous sense of decency. "I could not speak to a servant," says his Duchesse, "but he was dismissed the next day. I could not receive two visits in succession from the same man, but he was forbidden the house. If I showed any preference for one of my maids, she was at once taken away from me; and I was not allowed to see either his relations or my own." By these and a hundred other forms of persecution the Duc drove his wife to the verge of despair within a few months of



wedding her. His eccentricities and cruelty she bore with exemplary patience ; but when, in addition to squandering her property with reckless prodigality, he seized her jewels, she declined to live another day with him, and fled for refuge to the Convent of the Filles de Sainte Marie.

Here Hortense's suppressed spirits quickly reasserted themselves. Among the inmates she discovered a kindred spirit in Sidone de Lenoncourt, whose volatile conduct had furnished her husband with a pretext for shutting her up in the convent ; and the two captives seem to have led their guardians a merry dance, playing every conceivable kind of practical joke on them. Among their many mad escapades they "put ink into the Holy Water to bespatter the nuns ; they raced through the dormitories with a pack of dogs at their heels, scaring their custodians out of their senses ; and they deluged the beds of the good sisters with cascades of water." In short, they led the poor daughters of Sainte Marie such a life that they were driven to petition the King for their removal, and the incorrigible ladies were promptly transferred to the Abbey of Chelles, where they were kept in better order.

But Hortense's high spirits soon rebelled against the grim and depressing environment of the abbey ; and one dark night, dressing herself in man's clothes and accompanied by one of her waiting-women, similarly attired, and by an equerry named Couberville, she fared forth on horseback, and after an adventurous journey across the Alps reached Milan, where she found her sister Marie and her husband, the Constable Colonna, awaiting her.

Hortense appears to have been none too pleased at this meeting with her sister. She wished to escape for a time from the world, and especially from her relatives, and with this object shut herself up in her apartments, "always *en déshabille* but always more charming," refusing to see anyone but her attendants and Couberville, the companion of her flight, for whom she had conceived a violent fancy. So infatuated were the Duchesse and the equerry with each other that their relations soon became the talk of Milan, from which the Duchesse was glad to escape, first to the Convent Marzo, and later to the Palazzo Mancini.

While in Milan, Hortense seems to have amused herself with a succession of lovers. When Couberville found it prudent to leave Italy, his place in the lady's fickle affections was taken by Jacques de Belbœuf, a handsome young Norman, by the Marquis del Grello, Comte de Marsan and several other gallants, with whom in turn she coquetted, and whom she made fiercely jealous of each other; until at last, weary of exile and lovers alike, she returned in a penitent mood to France. Through the King's good offices, she consented to receive a small pension from her husband, on condition that she was allowed to live apart from him.

In the following spring, Hortense returned to Rome, to find her sister Marie, driven to distraction by her husband's coldness and cruelty, on the verge of flight. The Constable Colonna's early passion for his beautiful wife had been succeeded by a distaste amounting to hatred. He disgusted her with his amours, and when she ventured to

protest against his infidelity tried to poison her. This crowning injury determined Marie to fly ; she appealed for help to Louis, who promised her passports and escort as soon as she set foot in France ; arranged for a boat to be ready for her at Civita Vecchia ; and, inducing her newly arrived sister Hortense to accompany her, seized the opportunity afforded by her husband's absence to run away.

The coach containing the fugitives and two attendants reached Civita Vecchia at nightfall, and Palletier, one of the attendants, was despatched to the boat, which was to await them at a point four miles distant, to announce the coming of the ladies. "Meanwhile," says Marie, "Madame de Mazarin and I quitted the coach, penetrated into a very thick wood near the sea, and composed ourselves to sleep. On awakening towards morning we perceived the *valet de chambre*, who told us that he had failed to find the vessel. The horses were so tired that they were scarcely able to stand ; so we decided to abandon the coach and proceed on foot. The heat of the sun, a fast of four-and-twenty hours, and the disappointment of hearing no news of the vessel threw us into despair."

But the undaunted ladies, hungry, thirsty and weary, and dreading pursuit, tramped steadily on, until at last they reached the appointed place, to find not one but two vessels awaiting them. No sooner, however, had they embarked in the larger of the two than its master demanded a much greater sum than had been stipulated, threatening to throw the ladies overboard unless the money were at once forthcoming, a demand they were powerless to resist.

Meanwhile Colonna, who had discovered his wife's flight, was sending mounted messengers in all directions to stop her, while a score of swift galleys were taking up the chase on the sea.

After a perilous voyage of nine days, in which their vessel had many narrow escapes of being wrecked, the fugitives landed at Ciotat, where they mounted horses and, riding hard through the night, reached Marseilles. Here their troubles, so far from being ended, seemed only to be beginning. A messenger sent on in advance to announce their coming to Louis was waylaid and left half dead by the roadside; they found themselves surrounded by enemies and difficulties of all kinds placed in their way by Colonna's emissaries; and, to crown their misfortunes, they learned that a party of soldiers was approaching to arrest the Duchesse at the bidding of the Duc de Mazarin, her husband.

There was no hope of reaching Paris; and, in her alarm, Hortense left her sister, and made her way to Savoy, whose ruler, Charles Emanuel II., had once been her lover, and could at least be relied on to offer her an asylum in her extremity. Nor was her confidence misplaced. Her former lover gave her a cordial welcome, placed one of his châteaux at her service, and entertained her right royally. Under such agreeable conditions, maintaining a semi-royal state, holding her court and dispensing smiles and favours to the greatest nobles of Savoy, Hortense spent a few happy years until, on the Duke's death, his widow sent her an intimation that she must look elsewhere for an asylum. France was closed to her; Italy she did not wish to see again. England remained; and

to England the adventurous Duchesse now made her way, travelling through Switzerland, Germany and Holland, "on horseback and wearing a plumed hat and a peruke."

Charles II. had never forgotten the Cardinal's niece, whose charms had won his heart, and might have won his hand, in his days of exile; and it was a still more lovely woman who now made her appeal to his chivalry—a woman more intoxicatingly beautiful than any other who had enslaved his fancy or adorned his Court. He received her with open arms of welcome, installed her among his sultanas, and allowed her a pension of £4000 a year.

From being a homeless fugitive Hortense now found herself raised to a dizzy pinnacle, with a worshipping world at her feet. She was the intimate friend of the King—the adoration of his courtiers; while the praises of this new revelation of female loveliness were sung from one end of England to the other. Waller, the Court poet, lent his Muse to swell the chorus:

"When through the world fair Mazarine had run,  
Bright as her fellow-traveller, the sun;  
Hither at length the Roman eagle flies,  
As the last triumph of her conquering eyes."

In the splendour of Hortense's radiant beauty, the charms of the King's favourites, the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Cleveland included, paled to insignificance; while her sprightly wit and intelligence won the homage of the cleverest men in England. Saint-Evremond frankly avowed himself her slave, and considered it the crowning honour of his life to be privileged to see her daily, to act

as her secretary, her poet and champion; while Charles found his greatest happiness in her company. And this infatuation the ill-fated King carried to his grave. "I shall never forget," writes Evelyn, "the luxury, profaneness and gambling, and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God which this day se'night I was witness of. The King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland, Mazarin, etc., a French boy singing love-songs in that glorious gallery, while about twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset, round a large table, a bank of at least two hundred in gold before them. Six days after, all was in the dust."

Hortense appears to have flung herself into all the dissipations of Charles' dissolute Court, and especially to have developed a mania for gambling. To her passion for basset, the favourite card game of the time, she sacrificed everything, playing night after night until dawn broke, and often winning or losing thousands of guineas at a sitting. No wonder that she was driven to distraction by her creditors, whose importunity was so great that she was actually driven to appeal for help to her despised husband. The Duc refused point-blank to assist her, and told her that the best thing she could do was to become bankrupt.

Although at that time Hortense was nearing her fortieth year, and was already a grandmother, her beauty, which was greater than ever, kept her constantly surrounded by lovers; and among them was her own nephew, the Chevalier de Soissons, son of her sister Olympe, who conceived a violent

passion for his beautiful aunt. So infatuated was the youth and so distracted by jealousy that he challenged his principal rival, Baron de Barrier, a Swedish noble, to a duel and wounded him so severely that the Baron died a few days later. This tragedy horrified Hortense; for weeks she refused to see anyone, shut herself up in her room draped in black, and vowed that she would spend the rest of her days in a convent. But her grief and penitence were, as all Hortense's varied moods, short-lived, and she was soon as deep as ever in her beloved basset and in the other dissipations of the Court.

But Hortense's adventurous life was now rapidly drawing to its close. In her latter years she seems to have become a slave to the pleasures of the table. She stimulated her flagging energies by copious indulgence in brandy, of which it is said she would drink a pint at a draught. No constitution, however strong, could long withstand such excesses, and at fifty-three she drew her last breath at her Chelsea house, living for the last week of her life entirely on brandy.

When the Duc de Mazarin heard of his wife's death he (to quote Saint-Simon) "caused her body to be brought back to France, and marched it about with him from place to place. On one occasion he deposited it at Notre Dame de Liesse, where the worthy inhabitants prayed to it as a saint and touched it with their chaplets."

## A CROWN LOST FOR LOVE

IN the library of the University of Lund the curious may see two bundles of old love letters which are among the most interesting human documents in the world. The paper on which they are written is yellow with age and stained with travel; and the ink, in parts almost invisible, is faded to a pale brown. But, though the hands which wrote them have long crumbled to dust, the words still palpitate and burn with the passion that inspired them more than two centuries ago. Every page tells in vivid characters the story of the alternate rapture and despair, passionate devotion and petty jealousy, misunderstanding and reconciliation, which held two hearts in thrall, and the price of which one of the lovers paid with his life, the other with her liberty and the loss of a crown.

Sophie Dorothea, the heroine of one of the most romantic and tragic stories in human history, was born in the Castle of Celle one September day in the year 1666, the daughter of George William, Duke of Celle, and his morganatic wife, Eléonore d'Olbreuse, the beautiful daughter of a French marquis. But though the infant was cradled in a royal castle, and had for father the head of the great house of Brunswick-Lüneburg, her high-placed relatives ignored her very existence. Most contemptuous of them all was the Duchess Sophia,



wife of Ernest Augustus, the Duke of Celle's brother, and granddaughter of James I. of England, who wrote thus of the child's mother, "We shall soon have to say 'Madame la Duchesse' to this little clot of dirt, for is there another name for that mean *intrigante* who comes from nowhere?" To which her niece, Elizabeth Charlotte d'Orleans, answered, "Nowhere? My dear aunt, you are mistaken, if you will allow me to say so; she comes from a French family, and therefore from a *fraud*."

But, though the infant Sophie Dorothea had such a sorry welcome from her royal kinsfolk, she was idolised by her parents and the Court of Celle, a homage which excites no wonder when one looks at her portrait in the Cumberland Gallery at Herrenhausen—that of a singularly lovely child, crowned with flowers, whose merry brown eyes and sunny face peep out from a huge bundle of blossoms she is carrying in her arms. Thus, surrounded by love and luxury, Sophie grew up to beautiful girlhood, ideally happy in her home life and adored by her playfellows, among whom was the handsome Count Philip von Königsmarck, whose life was, in later years, to be so closely and tragically linked with her own.

When she was a child of ten the Duke of Celle had, with the German Emperor's sanction, led his morganatic wife to the altar and espoused her with much pomp and solemnity before his Court. The despised Eléonore was now the acknowledged consort of the Sovereign of Celle, and her daughter was promoted to the rank of a princess by birth of Brunswick-Lüneburg. And it was thus as a princess, dowered with rare beauty and heiress to a

large fortune, that Sophie Dorothea reached young womanhood.

Even the haughty Princess Sophia found her scorn and malice disarmed by such a transformation in the child of a mere "nobody." She deigned to call her "niece" and even to consider her claims as a possible bride to her own son, George Louis. There was, after all, much to be said for such a union. The young lady was beautiful and accomplished; she would be enormously rich; and, moreover, the marriage would unite the principalities of Celle and Hanover, to the latter of which the Duchess's husband, Ernest Augustus, had now succeeded.

When the autocratic Duchess Sophia once made up her mind to anything it was as good as accomplished. Objections were overruled, difficulties brushed away, and before Sophie Dorothea had any inkling of her fate the match was arranged. Mr W. H. Wilkins draws a charming picture of the young princess at this crucial period of her life. "She was a brunette, with dark brown, almost black hair, large velvety eyes, regular features, brilliant complexion, and the veriest little rosebud of a mouth. Her figure was perfectly proportioned; she had an exquisite neck and bust, and slender little hands and feet." She was, moreover, an accomplished dancer and musician, and had a tongue as clever and a wit as keen as her needle. On the other hand the young Prince who had been chosen for her husband was a singularly unprepossessing youth—awkward, sullen and slow of speech, of loutish manners and loose morals.

Seldom has a wooing been so inauspicious.

When the Princess learnt the fate that was in store for her, she flung herself on her bed in a passion of grief; and when her father gave her the Duchess Sophia's present, a miniature of George Louis set in diamonds, "she threw it from her with such violence that it was shattered against the wall, and the precious stones fell all about the room." It was only in response to her mother's tears and pleadings that at last she consented to see her future husband, and when she was presented to him she fainted in her mother's arms. Nor were the omens more propitious on her wedding day; for, as she stood at the altar, pale and trembling by the side of her sullen bridegroom, surrounded by all the splendour and pageantry of courts, the chapel of the Castle of Celle was plunged in darkness, and the shrieking of the storm outside drowned the voices of priests and choristers.

If anything more than the coldness and loutishness of her husband was necessary to crush the joy of life out of the girl-bride—she was only sixteen on her wedding day—it was provided by the oppressive atmosphere of the Court of Hanover to which she was now transferred. Surrounded by pomp and splendour, hedged in on all sides by a rigid etiquette, never allowed to leave the palace except in an enormous gilt coach, with postillions and running footmen, the child-wife sighed for the freedom of her old home life, the romps in the castle garden at Celle with her playfellows, the pony-races across country, and all the simple delights of her girlhood's days. More even than this, in a court where she looked in vain for a kind word or look, she longed for the loving embraces of her mother and

the proud smiles of her father. The one consolation left to her was the companionship of the lady in waiting she had brought with her, Fräulein von Knesebeck, who was her only link with the happy days that were gone for ever.

As the years passed the Princess's unhappiness grew. Her husband's indifference gave place to cruelty and brutality. Not content with neglecting his wife he flaunted his amours in her face, made love under her eyes to the favourite of the hour, from Madame Busche to the gigantic, coarse-featured von Schulenburg, whom in later years, when he was King of England, he made Duchess of Kendal; and when Sophie Dorothea reproached him for his infidelity his rage more than once found vent in a violent assault. Even the birth of a son, and later of a daughter, was powerless to soften his heart towards the girl he had vowed to love and cherish.

It is little wonder that the proud spirit of the Princess rebelled against such outrages to her feelings and against the general atmosphere of coldness and suspicion in which her lot was cast. She craved for sympathy and affection; and both came to her in a guise as seductive as it was dangerous. Sophie Dorothea had been a wife for six years when there came to Hanover Count Philip Königsmarck, the friend of her childhood, now a strikingly handsome soldierly man of twenty-eight, with a reputation for gallantry and reckless courage won in half the countries of Europe. Witty and accomplished, rich and prodigal in hospitality, he soon became a favourite at the Hanoverian Court. Duke Ernest made him

Colonel of his Guards, a post which gave him free access to the palace, and there none welcomed him more cordially than his playfellow of ten years earlier, the Princess Sophie, who found in him a sympathetic and chivalrous listener to the story of her troubles.

It would be difficult to imagine a situation more fraught with danger than that in which these two young people now found themselves. In the intimate confidence of their early meetings, Königs-marck's boyish love for the little Princess revived a hundredfold, and rapidly became an absorbing passion, on whose tide Sophie Dorothea was swept, not unwillingly, away; and when the Count was sent to Morea to fight against the Turks he took the Princess's heart with him. It was at this time that the correspondence began which ended only with Königs-marck's death, and which tells an eloquent story of their ill-fated love.

"Oh! how dearly it costs me to love you," the Count writes in an early letter. "God knows if I shall ever see you again, my life, my goddess! The thought that we may never meet more is death to me. I feel ready to plunge a dagger into my heart; but since I must live, I pray that it may be always for you." "Do you doubt my love?" he writes a few days later. "God be my witness, I have never loved as I love you. My dejection is wholly the result of absence from you. You may not believe it, but on the word of a man of honour I am often so overcome that I am near swooning away. . . . Were it not for your dear letter I should have utterly broken down. I am ready to cast at your feet my life,

my honour, my future, my fortune. I have forsworn all other women for you ; if you doubt this, name anyone you would like me to abandon, and I will never speak to her again."

Such transports as these are alternated with fits of jealousy and despondency, as when he writes, "I was ill-pleased with your coldness, and I spent the night most miserably. 'Alas!' I cried, 'God burns me with sickness and gives me no comfort, for he freezes the heart of my divinity, and life is intolerable.' I threw myself on my knees, tears in my eyes, and prayed that if it were true that you loved me no longer, I might die. I cannot tell you, therefore, the joy your letter gave me. I kissed it again and again." In a later letter he writes, "With what grief I hear that you have been in other arms than mine. . . . I adore and love you to distraction, yet I must not see you. Are there any torments like this in hell? . . . When wilt thou have pity? When shall I overcome thy coldness? Wilt thou ever keep from me the rapture of tasting perfect joy? I seek it in thy arms, and if I may not taste it there, I care for naught else." When the Princess melts to his pleadings and appoints a meeting he writes in an ecstasy, "The moments seem to me centuries ; what would I not give for twelve o'clock to strike! Be sure to have ready *de l'eau de la reine d'Hongrie*, for fear my rapture may make me swoon away. What! I shall embrace to-night the loveliest of women. I shall kiss her charming mouth. I shall worship her eyes, those eyes that enslave me. I shall have the joy of embracing her knees ; my tears will chase down her incomparable cheeks. Verily, madame, I shall die of joy!"

And the Princess's letters are marked with an ardour almost as great as that of her lover, as when she writes, "Nothing can make your absence bearable to me. I am faint with weeping. I hope to prove by my life that no woman has ever loved man as I love you. Of a truth, dear one, my love will only end with my life." When Königsmarck is away on campaign she is distracted by a thousand fears. "If you love me," she pleads, "take care of yourself: I should die if any accident happens to you. . . . But what joy when I see you again! It will be impossible for me to moderate my transports: I fear everybody will see how much I love you. It matters little for you are worthy, and I can never love you enough."

"You ask me to reassure you of my love," writes Königsmarck in answer to one of her letters. "I will never forsake you; so long as a drop of blood remains in my veins, so long as I draw breath, my heart is wholly yours. You are all my wealth, my treasure; I would sacrifice the world to kiss your divine mouth. I hate war and everything that takes me from your side. One favour only I ask from the gods—that I may be with you always in life and in death."

It was inevitable that this intimacy between the Princess and Königsmarck should attract attention, surrounded as they were by watchful and jealous eyes. In her alarm Sophie Dorothea begged the Count not to seek her again, an appeal to which he answered, "If I must give up seeing you, I will give up the world altogether. I cannot describe to you the state I have been in for the last four or five days; if grief could kill, I should surely be dead.

I no longer sleep, I do not eat at all, and I am a prey to gloomy foreboding. It may be that time and absence will cure you of your passion; but mine will end only with my life." And later, "I cannot live without you. If death does not decide my fate I will never abandon you—not even though I were poisoned, massacred, beaten black and blue, or burned alive."

Against the Countess Platen, the Duke of Hanover's mistress, whose overtures he had spurned and who in revenge tries to sow discord between him and the Princess, his anger is furious. "If I were lord of creation," he writes, "I would offer a sacrifice of her, and give her to the bears to eat; lions would suck her devil's blood and tigers tear her cowardly heart out. I would spend day and night seeking new torments to punish her for her black infamy in separating a man, who loves to distraction, from the object of his love."

Many are the stolen meetings between the lovers, every sweet moment of which is fraught with danger of discovery. "I will look out for you from ten o'clock until two o'clock," writes the Princess when arranging one of them. "You know the usual signal. The door of the palisade is always open. Do not forget to give the first signal; it is you who must give it, and I will wait for you under the trees. I look forward with rapture to seeing you. If joy can kill, it will kill me. You will find me as tender as ever—even more so. I shall give you so many kisses and with such fondness that you will be sorry you ever doubted me." How delightful these secret meetings were in spite of their danger is proved again and again in Königsmarck's letters, as when



he writes to the Princess, "I cannot forget those delectable moments. What pleasure! What transports! What rapture we tasted together! and with what grief we parted! Oh! that I could live those moments over again! Would that I had died then, drinking deep of your sweetness, your exquisite tenderness! What transports of passion were ours!"

But such happiness as this could not last for ever. Both the Princess and the Count had many enemies at the Hanoverian Court, who were only biding their time to compass the downfall of both, and of them all the most bitter and vindictive was the Countess Platen. One evening at a masked ball given by Königsmarck, and attended by the Princess and other members of the reigning family, the sight of a glove which the Princess had inadvertently put down at supper suggested to the Countess's evil mind an opportunity for revenge. Picking up the glove, and concealing it in her dress, she asked Königsmarck to accompany her on a stroll to a far-off pavilion in the gardens. Here, to quote Mr Wilkins, she plunged into a violent flirtation with him, and so engrossed his attention that he did not hear footsteps, until two men stood before them in the moonlight. They were Count Platen and George Louis, the Princess's husband. With a stifled cry of alarm the Countess hurried her companion away, at the same time dropping the tell-tale glove, which, as she intended, was picked up by the intruders on entering the pavilion, and recognised by George Louis as belonging to his wife. The Prince was furious. He had long suspected the relations between his princess and

Königsmarck, but here was damning proof of their guilt; for there was no mistaking the tall soldierly figure which he had seen hurrying away in the moonlight, in company with a lady whose glove betrayed her identity.

The immediate result of this trap, so craftily devised by La Platen, was a fierce quarrel between George Louis and his wife, which ended in a brutal and cowardly assault. Matters were now hastening to a crisis: but the infatuated lovers seemed blind to their danger. One July evening Königsmarck received a note from the Princess asking him to come to her that night in the Leine Schloss, an invitation which he eagerly obeyed. He left his house disguised, and wearing a short sword, and was admitted to the Princess's apartments by her lady in waiting. The keen eyes of La Platen's agents had watched his going, and stealthy steps had tracked him to his destination. When the Countess was informed that her quarry was run to earth at last, she wrote the news to the Elector, and received his authority to station four halberdiers outside the Princess's rooms to arrest Königsmarck as he left them. "You must take him dead or alive," were the instructions she gave—little dreaming, or indeed caring, in her mad jealousy, how literally they would be executed.

A few hours later the Count, with a last fond embrace, bade the Princess farewell, and with a light step, and lighter heart, walked down the dark corridor towards the door which had been left unbarred for his exit. *The door was locked!* He had barely turned to retrace his steps when, from their hiding-place, the four desperadoes sprang

upon him. He was caught like a rat in a trap; but, if he must die, he would at least die like a soldier, fighting to the last gasp. Quick as a flash he drew his sword. There was a clash and clatter of steel, a confused whirl of men, thrusting and parrying and panting in a grim life-and-death struggle. It was four against one: but that one was brave as a lion, and one of the finest swordsmen in Europe. One of his opponents went down pierced to the heart; another followed; then Königsmarck's sword snapped in two. A blow on the head from a battle-axe and he was down; a thrust of a coward's sword and he was run through the body. But, as he fell, he called out, "Spare the Princess! Spare the innocent Princess!"

From the shelter of a doorway La Platen had seen her victim fall, and now she comes to gloat over his last moments. But though he is dying fast there is still life in him. He sees the malignant face of the woman bending over him, and with his last breath he curses her bitterly, until in her rage she puts her foot on his mouth. A few moments later Königsmarck drew his last breath murmuring the name of the Princess he had loved so well, at the cost of his life. Long before dawn came the murdered man had been thrust into a recess, covered with quicklime, and the place walled up; and when the first rays of light filtered into the palace corridor they disclosed no trace of the foul deed which had done a gallant, if indiscreet, lover to death.

It was only after days of agonising suspense that the Princess learnt the terrible news of Königsmarck's murder, brutally told to her by the husband

of the woman who had compassed it. Her grief and despair were pitiful. Some years earlier she had written to him, "My life is bound up with yours. I would not live a moment if you were to be killed." And now that this terrible thing had happened she had only one wish—to end her own life and join her dead lover. But too close a watch was kept on her; this last escape from her misery was impossible, and she was left to her despair.

The rest of Sophie Dorothea's pathetic life story may be briefly told. After Königsmarck's death his rooms were ransacked and his papers seized—papers which revealed only too clearly not only the Princess's relations with her lover, but her detestation of her husband and of the Hanoverian house generally. These convincing proofs of her treachery sealed her doom. She was removed to the remote village of Ahlden, where she was kept in custody; and a few months later her husband, George Louis, procured a divorce from her. From this time the Princess was politically dead. "Her name was never mentioned in the Electoral Country of Hanover, it was struck out of the Church prayers, and expunged from official documents. Thrust out from the Hanoverian Court, she found her father's Court also closed against her, and she entered on a long captivity of thirty-two years—a captivity from which death alone was to bring release."

Over this long life in death in the Schloss Ahlden, which she bore with resignation and dignity, we must draw the curtain. It is true that her captivity was not without its gilding; she was

accorded the title of Duchess of Ahlden, and her suite of attendants, and her military escort, and held her small court: but these trappings only emphasised her isolation from the world in which she was entitled to play so conspicuous a part. Even her mother was not allowed to see her, and this was the bitterest drop in her cup of punishment.

In 1714 her husband, on the death of Queen Anne, was promoted as George I. to the British throne, and the lonely prisoner in the Castle of Ahlden learnt without a sigh of the splendid heritage which should have been hers as Queen of England. All she now asked of life was her liberty, and this was denied her. Thirteen years later the end of Sophie Dorothea's troubled life came. The coffin which held her remains was ignominiously thrust into a cellar of the castle and covered with sand, to await the orders of her husband the King: and when these orders at last arrived it was taken at dead of night, placed on a cart and conveyed to the Church of Celle where, without a prayer spoken over it, it was placed in the vault under the chancel.

A month later George I. set out from England to Hanover. He had reached the frontier of Holland when at midnight a letter was thrown through his carriage window and fell on his knees. It was from his dead wife, who, after upbraiding him for his cruelty, summoned him to meet her within a year and a day before the throne of God to answer for the wrong he had done her. As George read this ominous message from the dead, the letter dropped from his hands and he fell

forward in a fit. A few hours later he had gone to meet his wife before the Great Tribunal, drawing his last breath, where he had drawn his first, in the Palace of Osnabrück, sixty-seven years before.

## THE MYSTERIOUS LADY OF VERSAILLES

ONE May day, in the year 1858, a curious, excited crowd was gathered in front of No. 11 Rue du Marché Neuf, in the St Louis quarter of Versailles, reading the contents of a bill which announced the sale of the effects of the man who during his lifetime was known as Mademoiselle Henriette Jenny Savalette de Langes, and laughing uproariously over the list of goods to be sold, which included "numerous articles of woman's attire, including thirty dresses, mostly of silk, etc."

If a thunderbolt had fallen on Versailles its inhabitants could scarcely have been more startled than by the revelation that Mademoiselle de Langes was a man. There had been no figure in Versailles more familiar than that of Mademoiselle—the tall, gaunt, angular old lady, with her long face framed in the black ruches of her bonnet, who was to be seen every day on her shopping excursions or walking the streets, usually with a troop of small boys shouting at her heels. A grim, taciturn, shabby creature who lived her life apart from them all, and yet carrying herself with a certain dignity which kept the curious and impertinent at a distance.

Who could she be, this solitary woman who stalked daily among them, seeing none and heeding none, was a question which had passed from

lips to lips for years and which none could answer. It was known that she had many friends in the highest quarters; and had she not occupied an apartment in the Château de Versailles?—evidence, surely, that she was a woman of some importance.

And now that she was dead, the mystery of her life was dramatically deepened. Mademoiselle de Langes was a man, who all these years had masqueraded, and with such conspicuous success, as a woman. Here was fine food for gossip and speculation. Perhaps the mysterious lady was none other than the Dauphin who, long years before, had been smuggled from his Temple prison and had vanished, none knew where. Could it be possible that Mademoiselle was Louis XVII., the rightful King of France? She was certainly about the age he would have been if he had lived, and—yes, now they remembered—she bore a certain likeness to the Dauphin's father, Louis XVI., the murdered King. The suggestion flew from mouth to mouth until all Versailles was convinced that the lady of mystery was the missing Dauphin, who had lived a sordid and miserable life among them while another sat on his throne.

But this was by no means the tale "Mademoiselle" had told of herself. Fifty years earlier she had made her first appearance in Paris, claiming to be the daughter of M. Savalette de Langes, who had been Keeper of the Royal Treasury to Louis XV. Her father, she declared, ruined himself by lending 5,000,000 francs to the Comte d'Artois, and had died a beggar, leaving his daughter to the mercy of the world. At the restoration she received a tardy reward for her father's loyalty in



the form of two small pensions and the control of the Villejuif post office, which made a small addition to her income ; and, later, an apartment in the Palace of Versailles was given to her—a poor return enough for the loss of millions of francs, but still better than nothing.

Nor was this all. Many of the greatest men and women in France took pity on poor Demoiselle de Langes, and not only supplied her wants but admitted her to intimate friendship. Her wardrobe was kept replenished by the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld, Maréchale Macdonald and other ladies of high degree ; while the Duc de Luynes, Queen Amelia, and Prince Louis Napoleon also took her under their wing, and saw that she did not lack more material comforts.

And yet Mademoiselle was not happy. She seemed to be pursued by a demon of unrest, which would not allow her to remain long in one place. From one apartment to another, in Paris and Versailles, she was constantly moving, until the number of her changed addresses ran into hundreds ; and always she was the same mysterious woman, leading a life apart from the people among whom she moved. There must, however, have been some fascination about her, for she had at least two love affairs of which the records survive ; and once at least she was on the very eve of marriage. One of her wooers was a Government clerk ; the second was an army officer, one Major Lacipiere, who was loyal to her for sixteen years, and is said to have died of a broken heart when his engagement ended.

Mademoiselle seems to have led the Major an

unhappy life by her capricious moods, if one may judge from his letters. Thus, in 1831, when his lady-love must have been far advanced in the forties, he writes: "Time has made no change in my feelings towards you, feelings which you have inspired in my breast for many years past. . . . And yet you delight in heaping threats, reproaches and insults on me. In spite of this I am ready to do anything you require." Eight years later, the disillusioned lover unburdened himself thus, "I am resigned to all your persecutions, for you seem to me to be implacable. Every day I shed bitter tears through having known you. I curse the day on which we met."

But that Mademoiselle was able to inspire a real passion is proved by the letters of another wooer who writes thus ardently: "I dared not bring your veil myself, but I hoped to return it this morning. I am very grieved to have kept you waiting for it; it returns to its mistress with a thousand kisses which I almost thought I was giving to the one I love." A little later the same lover writes: "How can I arrange to see you this evening? There is a simple way of writing to me from where you are—fasten a little stone to your letter and throw it over the trellis-work. . . . If, when I return at nine o'clock, you are at home, I will stand at my window and we can meet at your post. I will make a sign that I am going out, and you will also leave the house. A few notes on my violin will be the signal." Such was the wooing of Mademoiselle in the days of her youth, when, in spite of her sex, she was able to inspire in at least one lover a passion

which seems to have been as sincere as it was romantic.

Thus for half-a-century Mademoiselle de Langes led her mysterious life, playing the *rôle* of woman so successfully that none ever doubted her sex, gaining Government pensions by fraudulent pretences and under a false name, and finding her dupes in the most exalted circles of France. When her last illness seized her in the Rue du Marché Neuf she was nursed by two kind neighbours, who, entering her room one morning, found her lying dead at the foot of her bed. A doctor was hastily summoned and, while he was writing the burial certificate, the neighbours prepared to lay out the corpse. Suddenly, they uttered a cry. They had made the discovery that the deceased was a man. Two days later "Mademoiselle" was buried by the state, in the cemetery of Saint Louis, at a cost of two francs fifty centimes.

When the mean apartments occupied by Savalette in the Rue du Marché Neuf were examined after his death they revealed surely the most remarkable collection of goods and chattels ever brought together by a human being. Empire arm-chairs and Louis Seize *bergères* rubbed shoulders with broken tables, legless stools and saucepans. Silk dresses were scattered everywhere in profusion among a litter of broken crockery, flat-irons, empty bottles and staved-in casks. There were scores of skirts, of every colour of the rainbow, tattered sunshades, hats and bonnets, bolsters and picture frames, a plaster-mask, a bouquet of flowers in a wooden frame and a pewter syringe.

In a mahogany desk were found a magnificent

Louis XIV. quilt, among shreds of stuff and pieces of costly silk; and banknotes to the value of 21,000 francs. A dilapidated trunk disclosed a number of dresses of violet *moiré* and nearly 9000 francs in gold; while a small box contained Government stock worth many thousands of francs. Curiously enough, as M. Lenotre, to whose fascinating pages I am greatly indebted for this story, says, "there is no mention in the inventory of razors!"

Nor was there found among this heterogeneous collection any clue to the identity of its late owner, who had evidently taken every precaution to carry his secret with him to the grave. The only approach to a clue was contained in the following lines scribbled on a scrap of paper, apparently in a black and desperate mood:—

"The day has now come when I am going to tear away the veil which conceals your terrible sins. Tremble, eternal sinner, lest I reveal to the world, which is seeking for you, the detestable monster you are. Do you not see that all around you are beginning to guess the secret of your hypocrisy? . . . You are horribly disgusting; the filth that covers your loathsome body will cause it to fall into shreds; I advise you, therefore, to cleanse yourself. . . . Farewell, old monster, whom demons vomited on to the earth—go back to Orleans to sell your cheeses and salads. Again farewell, old Michel!"

In these mad ravings surely there must be some clue to the secret of Savalette's past. Was his former name, as is suggested, "Michel," who had sold cheeses and salads at Orleans? Or was the diatribe directed against some unknown person

whose enemy he was? For more than forty years the secret of the man-woman's identity remained hidden, the subject of much speculation. Some, it is said, lived and died in the belief that he was none other than the Dauphin of France; others declared that in his young days he had probably murdered Savalette's daughter, whose identity he then assumed in the hope of establishing his claim to the 5,000,000 francs lent by the Keeper of the Royal Treasury to the Comte d'Artois. But none knew the truth, until M. Lenotre's patient investigations at last brought it to light a few years ago. And the story he tells is at least as strange as the previously ascertained history of the mysterious "lady" of Versailles.

According to M. Lenotre there was living in Paris at the outbreak of the French Revolution a M. Savalette de Langes, brother, or at least a near kinsman, of de Langes, the Keeper of the Royal Treasury, who had ruined himself by lending several millions of francs to the brother of Louis XVI. He was a widower with an only daughter, named Jenny, a beautiful girl who had just entered her teens; and when the Reign of Terror began in Paris he was among the first to seek safety in flight. Accompanied by his daughter, he left Paris on his way to the Breton coast, whence he hoped to make his way to England until the storm blew over and he was able to return to his native land. At one of the stopping-places on his journey (probably at Orleans, says M. Lenotre) he made the acquaintance of a young man, of smart appearance and plausible tongue, who gallantly offered to act as his

guide to the coast of Brittany, knowing, as he professed, every inch of the road. This offer M. de Langes gratefully accepted, and for the remainder of the journey he found the polite stranger not only a reliable guide but an entertaining companion.

Arrived at St Malo, M. de Langes found the town crowded with foreigners, all, like himself, anxious to cross the sea ; and among them was the young daughter of the Marquis de T——, whom her father had sent to seek safety in England, under the charge of an old retainer of the family, intending to follow her later. Between the two girls, the daughter of M. de Langes and Mademoiselle Jeanne Françoise de T——, a sudden friendship sprang up, and when Mademoiselle Jenny begged her father to allow her new friend to accompany them on their journey, M. de Langes gladly gave consent. Passages were secured on a vessel, ostensibly bound for Plymouth ; and to this destination the five fugitives (for the plausible stranger, whom M. Lenotre calls B——, had decided to go with them) set sail from St Malo.

But they were not destined to see even the coast of England ; for when the vessel had been two days at sea the captain informed his passengers that, for certain good reasons, he dared not land in England, and that he intended to take them to Hamburg. In vain the fugitives protested against this breach of faith. The captain was adamant ; he was going to Hamburg and they were bound to go with him ; and, accordingly, at Hamburg they were landed in due course, where they established themselves as best they could. Here, one calamity after another befell the small party. The old

Breton servant was seized with a fatal illness and died three days after landing. A few weeks later they were attacked by typhus fever, to which first M. de Langes succumbed and then his daughter—the latter exclaiming, as she lay dying, to her friend Jeanne Françoise, “Do not forget that the Comte d’Artois has left me to die in poverty, and that he owes my family five millions!”

There now only remained two survivors of the party—the Marquis de T——’s young daughter, Jeanne Françoise, and M. B——, who now found themselves reduced to such financial straits that they were compelled to live in a cellar and to sleep on heaps of rags. Jeanne Françoise had sent many appealing letters to her parents, to none of which she had received any reply; and, in her extremity, deserted, as she thought, by her family, she yielded to the solicitations of her companion—the only friend she had left in the world—and consented to live with him as his mistress.

Meanwhile B——, who appears to have been an unscrupulous rascal, had formulated a scheme for recovering a part at least of the de Langes millions. He wrote letter after letter to the Comte d’Artois signed with the name of the dead Jenny de Langes and purporting to come from the daughter of the Comte’s creditor, the Keeper of the Treasury—but to no purpose. The letters either never reached their destination, or were ignored by the prince.

Thus a few years passed—years of terrible unhappiness for Jeanne Françoise, forsaken by the world and condemned to a life of poverty and infamy with a man whose character filled her with

disgust. But with the close of the Revolution came emancipation—an emancipation which she now dreaded as much as she had once longed for it, for she was horrified at the thought that her family might learn the life which circumstances had compelled her to lead. After a long and fruitless search her parents discovered the whereabouts of their long-lost daughter, and sent a messenger to convey her back to her home in Brittany—the rascally B—— prudently disappearing before the messenger's arrival.

Jeanne Françoise now found herself restored to the comforts and splendours of her former life. The past few years were but a hideous nightmare—their only legacy, the guilty secret she carried in her breast, fearing lest any day it might leap to light. But, as the years passed, the memory and the danger became fainter, and when the Comte de S—— R—— came a-wooing she consented to become his wife, secure, as she thought, from any discovery of the hideous secret of her past life. And, as the Comtesse de S—— R——, Jeanne Françoise became one of the chief ornaments of the Bourbon Court, the intimate friend of royalties, with a reputation as much for her saintly life as for her beauty and personal charm.

One day, in 1815, a strange woman presented herself at her mansion in the Rue de la P——, and asked to see the Comtesse, who gave orders that the visitor should be shown in. A tall, thin woman with a circular border of hair and ample bonnet-strings was ushered into the drawing-room, and when the servant had retired raised her veil and asked the Comtesse, “Do you recognise me?”



At the sight of the face thus revealed Madame de S—— R—— recoiled with horror, for she recognised instantly the man who was associated with the terrible past which she had long thought dead beyond recalling. It was B——, the man who had ruined her life, the sharer of the dreadful secret the disclosure of which meant something far worse than death. “Ah!” he exclaimed with a leer of triumph, “I see you recognise your old friend—*Jenny Savallete de Langes*. That is good. Now we can talk business.” Then he proceeded to unfold his plans to the half-fainting, awestruck Comtesse. Briefly they were these—he had decided to personate the dead Jenny de Langes, and in the character of the daughter of the man who had lent the Comte d’Artois 5,000,000 francs, to prosecute his claim for a return of the borrowed money. In order to accomplish this he must be identified and have the support of someone of position at the Court; and no one could answer this purpose so well as madame. If she consented, nothing would be said about the little episode at Hamburg. If not—well, madame was the best judge.

What could the Comtesse do? On the one side she was threatened with an exposure which would wreck her life and the happiness of all dear to her—on the other, she must consent to become the tool of an unscrupulous miscreant. She chose the latter alternative; and Mademoiselle Jenny thus had a powerful friend to assist her in “establishing her rights” to the lost de Langes millions.

The Comtesse discharged her part of the contract with the utmost loyalty. She introduced “Mademoiselle de Langes” to her exalted friends, even to

royalty itself, praised her virtues, evoked pity for her sufferings and supported her preposterous claims to the best of her ability. She secured for her pensions from the Government and other valuable concessions, including a suite of apartments at the Château of Versailles; but of the de Langes millions, even the Comtesse could not help him to recover a solitary franc. What she suffered, while playing this discreditable *rôle*, and what hourly torture she endured from fear lest her former lover, disappointed at her lack of success, should turn traitor and reveal her secret after all, may be left to the imagination. Even the horrors of her Hamburg life were as nothing compared with the agonies of mind she must have endured during this terrible time.

To Mademoiselle Jenny's credit it must be said that she too was loyal to her undertaking. She not only kept the Comtesse's secret inviolate, but assisted her by the skill with which she assumed her fraudulent character. She played the part of woman—an injured and long-suffering woman—to perfection. She developed skill in many female arts, such as lacework, embroidery and cooking. She flirted and coquetted with the men; and wormed herself into the favour of great ladies by her amiability and her patience under a great wrong.

But such a condition of things could not last indefinitely. The Comtesse, at last made desperate by the deceitful dual life she was compelled to lead, is supposed to have taken her husband into her confidence—to have told him of the discreditable episode in her past life and to have thrown herself

on his mercy. However this may have been, there seems no doubt that in some way she was able to break free from the galling fetters which bound her to her old lover. Not only her own door, but, one by one, the doors of her friends were gradually closed against him.

Baffled and outwitted he recognised that his game was played out, and resigned himself to the inevitable. His power to injure the Comtesse was gone, and he was in danger of being handed over to the law. From this period began that life of restless movement from place to place, of solitary shunning of his fellow-men and of growing eccentricities which had its dramatic conclusion in the Rue du Marché Neuf, when Mademoiselle Jenny Savalette de Langes was discovered to be a man.

## PRINCE OR PEASANT?

### A ROMANCE OF THE HOUSE OF ORANGE

*(The following singular and romantic story was told to me some years ago by a late diplomatist, who probably knew as much as any man of his time of the secret history of the Courts of Europe; and I reproduce the story as nearly as possible in his own words)*

IT was in the early seventies that I made the acquaintance in Paris of the Prince of Orange, whose strange doings were at the time the talk of Europe. A few months earlier, as heir to the throne of the Netherlands, he had occupied a proud position in the world of royalties, and had been an honoured and *fêted* guest at the greatest courts of the Continent. Then when his star was at its zenith, he had suddenly and mysteriously renounced his royal rank, turned his back on the splendours of courts and come to Paris, to fling himself into the lowest dissipations of the French capital. What was the cause of this tragic transformation, none seemed to know. The most plausible explanation was that he had quarrelled with his father, King William III., beyond all hope of reconciliation, and had fled to Paris in disgrace, to find in its allurements forgetfulness of his trouble.

Paris was scandalised daily by the reports of the Prince's doings. More than once he was seen

reeling, hilariously drunk, through the streets, or lying incapable, the sport of the gamins; he was known to haunt the lowest cabarets, drinking and gambling with the scum of the capital. Not only had he thrown aside every vestige of royal dignity, but he seemed dead to all sense of decency.

To say that his conduct created consternation in France, especially in the highest quarters, is to understate the feeling of disgust and alarm it caused; for of all the princes of Europe there was not one on whose life such mighty issues hung. He was heir, not only to the throne of Holland, but also—a much more important matter to France—to the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, that buffer state between Germany and France on which both countries were casting envious eyes. If the Prince of Orange should die before coming to his kingdom Luxemburg would, beyond all doubt, fall to a German prince and thus strengthen the arm of France's powerful enemy. On the other hand if the Prince survived his father, the grand duchy would still remain allied to the Dutch crown—a vital factor for the balance of power and the peace of Europe.

But King William was still a lusty man, with probably many years of life before him, while his son and heir was burning the candle, not only at both ends, but in the middle; and it seemed humanly certain that his Paris dissipations would bring his career to an early and tragic close. You can thus understand something of the horror with which France, just recovering from her disastrous war with Germany, watched the headlong plunge to ruin of the young man on whose life so much

depended. And it seemed hopeless to try to avert the calamity. Attempts were made, to my knowledge, to stop the Prince in his downward career; but, though he would promise to amend his ways and even to make peace with his father, the very next day he was back in the slough again, revelling with his low companions of both sexes.

Probably no heir to a throne ever began his life under brighter conditions of promise than this misguided Prince. As a boy he exhibited all the qualities of head and heart which go to the making of a great ruler. He was strikingly handsome and gave promise of exceptional manly beauty; and to these gifts were allied a warmth of heart and a highly sensitive nature which undoubtedly were the first cause of his undoing.

The boy craved affection, but none was given to him by his father, from whom he naturally expected it. To all his timid advances King William turned a cold shoulder. The very sight of his son seemed to anger him; and more than once when the boy looked for a smile or a kind word he was told to "begone." It is little wonder that under such treatment the young Prince's affection was frozen at its source. Love gave place to indifference, and in time to a bitter resentment. If he could not find appreciation at home, he would seek it elsewhere; and, as a boy barely in his teens, he would steal out of the palace and wander through the streets of The Hague or in the country around, picking up any acquaintance that came his way; and there was no lack of those who were proud to have the company of the heir to the throne.

He made friends of the sailors and fishermen,

went out to sea with them, and hobnobbed with them over their pots of beer. He fell into the company of adventurers of both sexes, learned to gamble and to drink and to be as disreputable as themselves. When news of these escapades came to King William's ears, he was beside himself with rage. He lectured the Prince severely on his depraved tastes, punished him, and ordered his governor to keep him under lock and key, if necessary. But this treatment only served to feed the fires of the Prince's rebellion. He defied his father and governor to do their worst; and plunged deeper in the dissipation which he had grown to love.

One day the climax came. The King, furious at some escapade wilder and more disgraceful than any that had preceded it, summoned the Prince before him, and poured the vials of his wrath on him. "You should have been the son of a peasant and not of a king," he continued scathingly, "since your tastes are so degraded." Stung by the taunt the Prince answered, "I wish I had been; for then, at least, I might have had a father who cared a little for me." At this the King, beside himself with rage, burst into a torrent of abuse, using epithets so degrading that the Prince at last exclaimed, "You forget, Sire, that the blood of the House of Orange flows in my veins as in yours." "That is a lie," thundered the King. "*You are no son of mine*"; and, then, as if horrified at what he had said, he suddenly checked himself and collapsed trembling into a chair.

But the fatal words had been spoken and could not be recalled. His father had disavowed him,

had declared that he was no son of his. This then was the secret which explained all—his loveless childhood, the coldness and aversion with which the King had always repelled him. For a time the revelation stunned the Prince, and deprived him of all power of speech ; but, recovering himself with a great effort, he demanded an explanation of the terrible words—an explanation which the King, probably realising that he had gone too far to retreat, or hoping that the revelation might lead the Prince to reform his conduct, at last consented to give.

How the story King William had to tell came to my knowledge I am not at liberty to state, but that it is true I assure you I have the best means of knowing. I will tell it to you just as I heard it ; and since the actors in this singular drama have long been dead I cannot see any objection to your making it public.

Queen Sophia, of Holland, had been married twelve years without providing an heir to her husband's throne, when the people of the Netherlands were thrown into a high state of jubilation by the news that she was at last expected to become a mother. Would the child be a girl or a boy was the question which passed from mouth to mouth ; and as the fateful day drew near speculation reached a pitch of almost feverish excitement. The sex of the coming child was, as I have explained, a matter not only of national, but of international concern. If it should be a girl, farewell to the Duchy of Luxemburg, which, under the Salic law, could not be inherited by a female and would thus be lost to Holland for ever, with consequences to the peace



of Europe too serious to contemplate. The King himself was even more anxious and excited than his subjects, and for days before the event only left his wife's side to pace restlessly up and down an adjoining room, or to snatch a few minutes of disturbed slumber.

When the child was born, a little unexpectedly, the only persons present were the physician and a nurse who was at once sent to announce the event to the King and to request him to come to the royal bedchamber. A glance at the doctor's face revealed the truth to his Majesty, without a word spoken. The infant was a girl; all his hopes and those of his subjects—nay, of half Europe—were laid in the dust; or if any remained for the future, they were destroyed by the doctor's announcement that the Queen could never bear another child.

William was distraught. The event, now that he grasped it in its full significance, was worse than all his fears, since hope was dead. He rebelled against the harshness of fate, and all kinds of mad speculations ran riot in his brain. Perhaps, he suggested, he might outlive the Queen, and her successor might provide a male heir to Luxemburg. No, was the doctor's answer; it was much more probable that the Queen would survive him. Would it not be possible then, was the King's next wild proposal, to declare that the child was a boy and to bring her up as a male; but a little consideration showed how impracticable the suggestion was.

At this stage of the King's perplexity the Prime Minister arrived at the palace; and to him his Majesty told his predicament and asked his advice,

little dreaming that a solution of the difficulty was at hand. To the alert and daring mind of the Premier a way of escape instantly suggested itself. As he had been walking through the park on his way to the palace he had heard that the wife of one of the lodge-keepers had, a few hours earlier, given birth to a boy. "If your Majesty is agreeable," he said, "it would be a comparatively easy matter to arrange an exchange of infants. The lodge-keeper's boy can be brought to the palace and installed in the royal nursery : and the Queen's daughter can take his place at the lodge."

Inhuman, almost inconceivable, as the proposal was, the King approved it, and it was promptly carried into effect. The physician himself took away the princess and effected the substitution, bringing back the lodge-keeper's child to be brought up in the palace as heir to the thrones of Holland and Luxemburg. The few actors in this infamous drama were sworn to secrecy, heavy bribes serving to secure more completely the silence of the nurse and the parents of the boy ; while the Queen, who knew nothing of the exchange, took to her breast the low-born infant, proud in the knowledge that she had not disappointed a nation's hopes. Fortunately the royal child only survived the terrible wrong done to her a few days, thus reducing materially the risk of discovery ; and the lodge-keeper's son grew up to young manhood in absolute ignorance that he was other than the rightful heir to the crown of Holland, until the King, in a moment of ungovernable rage, revealed the secret of his birth.

You may imagine the feelings of the Prince as

this story was pitilessly unfolded by the man whom he had always regarded as his father. At first he thought that it was a story concocted by the King to reduce him to a becoming state of submission. It was too preposterous to be true—that he who, from his earliest memory, had occupied the proud position of heir to the throne of the Netherlands, and who had moved, in this character, in the most exalted circles of European royalty, should be the son of a lodge-keeper, whose proper position in life was among the humblest of his future subjects. But as the King proceeded and the conviction slowly grew in his dazed mind that this was no made-up tale, but a grave, precise statement of fact, a fierce anger took the place of stupefaction, as he realised the dastardly plot of which he had been the innocent victim.

It was true then that he was nobody's son, that the trappings of royalty had been but a mockery, and that he had been made to pose to the world as an impostor such as the world had rarely known. In his bitter resentment he vowed that he would renounce his rank and make a public exposure of the infamous trick that had been practised on him and on the nation; and it was only when the King, realising his danger, implored the Prince to spare him this shame, that he consented to remain silent.

One thing was clear. He could no longer continue to play the false *rôle* that had been thrust on him. He would shake the dust of Holland off his feet, and go away—anywhere where he could hide himself from the world. The King, after trying in vain to shake his resolution, at last consented

that he should retire, for a time at least, into private life ; and, with a sufficient allowance, the Prince, who was no prince, was allowed to depart—to Paris, where he thought he could best hide himself and his troubles.

And this was how the Prince of Orange came to be in Paris, and it is some explanation, if not an excuse, for the life he led there. How that life ended, after years of terrible dissipation, the world knows. Some years before his death Queen Sophia had died ; and King William was able to marry again. But his hopes of saving Luxemburg were again doomed to failure. His second queen had only one child, a daughter, who now reigns in his place ; and Luxemburg was lost to Holland.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST ARCHDUKE

MANY stories are told of princes who, for the love of maids of low degree, have gladly laid aside the trappings of their royal rank and turned their backs on the splendours of courts; but not one of them all has quite the haunting fascination of the love romance of Johann Salvator, Archduke of Austria, which is to-day as strong in its appeal to the imagination as it was a score of years ago, while the mystery that surrounds it is more impenetrable than ever. The last chapter of it still remains unwritten; and if any live to read it, it will probably prove even more remarkable than those which precede it.

Nearly sixty years have gone since the hero of this strange romance was cradled at Florence, the son of the Grand Duke Leopold, and near of kin to the Emperor of Austria. It was a proud heritage to which this scion of the Hapsburgs was born. The most royal blood of Europe ran in his veins, and he was destined to move in the innermost circle which had for its centre one of the greatest thrones of the world. And as a boy Prince Johann gave promise of becoming one of the most brilliant figures in this circle. He was dowered with a rare beauty and intelligence, and his ambition was to become a great scholar and a distinguished soldier. He had a genius for master-

ing languages ; and he developed remarkable gifts as a poet, musician and naturalist. But his favourite study was the science of war ; and, long before he reached manhood, there was little of the military systems and resources of Europe that he did not know all about.

It would have been well for the young Archduke if he had left military matters alone ; for the more he studied and learned, the more dissatisfied was he with the antiquated methods of his own country. This would have mattered little, if he could only have kept his views to himself or have exercised a little tact in advancing them. But this Johann could not do. He was a born agitator and reformer ; and, like so many men of his class, was as rash in advocating his views as he was careful in forming them. His first tactical blunder was in publishing a pamphlet in which he mercilessly exposed the faulty organisation of the Austrian artillery. The fossilised generals gasped with horror at the daring of the young man ; and even the Emperor, who always had a weakness for his clever kinsman, read him a lecture on his temerity.

But Johann went his own way in spite of the anger of generals and of imperial frowns. He had a mission in life—to reform the Austrian army—and he meant to go on with it. Not long after he had launched his pamphlet, he published a book on “Drill and Training,” in which he scathingly criticised the Austrian military system from top to bottom, turning it into ridicule. The book created a tremendous storm. It was rapturously hailed by the populace and the younger men of the army ; but on the War Office and the Court it fell like a

bomb. The consternation and wrath it excited were too great for words. Could nothing be done to stop the pen and tongue of this young iconoclast?

The Archduke, however, only smiled at the storm he had raised. He could afford to smile; for he had the nation at his back. Austria idolised the plain-speaking prince, who had proved on many a battlefield in Bosnia that he was as clever and courageous as he was outspoken; and had not even the War Office been compelled to recognise his supreme abilities by raising him to field-marshal's rank at an age when even an archduke might have counted himself lucky to wear the badge of colonel?

All might still have gone well with Johann if he had been content to couch his lance in the cause of military reform. But his hotheadedness now carried him into the dangerous field of politics. He conceived a scheme for freeing Russia from the misrule of the Tsar by a joint crusade of France and Austria; he became embroiled in Balkan politics; he accused Bismarck of designing the destruction of the house of Hapsburg; and in these and other ways became a serious menace to the peace of Europe. To crown his follies he quarrelled seriously with the Crown Prince Rudolph, his most intimate friend; and openly defied Field-Marshal Archduke Albert when he ventured to remonstrate with him.

The end of it all was inevitable. The Emperor, his authority defied and his patience exhausted, sent for the Archduke and sternly told him to choose one of two alternatives. He must either amend his ways altogether, or leave the army and resign his royal rank. He chose the latter, and left the Emperor's presence a broken man. His rank as

a soldier was taken from him, his name was struck out of the army-list, and he was forbidden to show his face at Court.

The Archduke cared not a straw for the loss of his royal rank, or for the wrath of those in high places ; but his dismissal from the army cut him to the heart.

It was a punishment he had never conceived possible. The army was the one thing he cared for most on earth, and in the first fresh burst of grief life itself appeared a useless burden now that he could no longer pursue the profession he so loved. His friends, to mitigate in some measure the violence of the blow, assured him his disgrace could not last long, as his brilliant qualities would soon soften the Emperor's heart and cause his reinstatement. Strong pressure was brought to bear to induce him to submit to his punishment in silence, and at first he did so, but as the days passed the task of restraining him became more and more difficult.

During those long and weary months of enforced inactivity Johann spent his time literally eating out his heart. He retired to his estate near Gmunden in great discontent. There he passed the days in hunting and the evenings in the company of Count Prokesch, with whom he read and discussed Shakespeare and the works of other great playwrights.

Naturally, however, it was not long before his restless spirit rebelled against a life so tame and cabined. He must seek distraction somewhere, and to Vienna he went in search of it, little dreaming what a revolutionary effect these visits were to have on his life. One night in the Imperial Theatre



there floated on to the stage a vision of radiant young beauty, of voluptuous charm and sylph-like grace, which was a new revelation to him of the possibilities of female loveliness. There was a subtle witchery in every glance of her bright eyes and every undulation of her exquisitely fashioned body. It was an intoxication to watch her, and from the moment of her entry the vision possessed and absorbed the young Archduke to the exclusion of all the other brilliant and beautiful figures on the stage.

Before he left the theatre he realised that he would know no peace until he had won this bewitcher of the senses and made her his own; and before he slept he had discovered who she was and where she was to be found. The girl whose magic had cast such a potent spell over the prince's heart was Émilie Stubel, daughter of a small Viennese tradesman. She had, he learned, two sisters, both, like herself, on the stage, and a brother, Camille, who played minor *rôles* in opera. Only a year or two earlier, Émilie had made her stage *début* in the ballet; but her beauty, grace and clever dancing had already captured the heart and homage of Vienna, as they would, no doubt, later conquer the world.

Such was Émilie Stubel, the tradesman's daughter, when, all unknown to herself, she made a conquest of the Emperor's cousin. That she was a maid of such low degree mattered not one iota to the Archduke. He was burning with resentment against those of his own station; he had forsworn them and the gilded circle in which they moved, while Émilie was more radiantly lovely than any girl he

had met in the world of courts, a jewel fit to be worn on any man's breast.

It was no difficult matter for him to make the young lady's acquaintance, which he did in the guise of a student; and in this *rôle* he was introduced to Émilie's parents, whose favour was quickly won by the handsome, unassuming young man, whom they were not at all unwilling to accept as a son-in-law. Nor was it long before Émilie lost her heart as completely to her devoted young wooer as he had lost his, at first sight, to her. Nothing could be happier than the state of affairs. Émilie was in the seventh heaven of delight, her parents were highly gratified, and the "student" *fiancé* was the happiest man in Vienna.

It was a few weeks after this happy consummation of love's young dream that Émilie and her mother went to see a review of the army, which was attended by many of the greatest personages in Austria; and there, to her amazement, she saw her student-lover, in a uniform so splendid that, as she said, "it quite took my breath away." What was he doing there, the poor student, masquerading in attire so rich and splendid? Surely she must be mistaken; but, no, it was undoubtedly her lover; there was no mistaking the handsome face and dignified carriage which had glorified the scholar in her eyes. "Who is he?" she asked a bystander. "That," was the answer, "is the Archduke Johann!"

It was a lively greeting the Archduke received when, on the following day, he called at the house of his lady-love. Frau Stubel read him a severe lecture on his conduct in winning her daughter's

affection under false pretences. No good could come of it, she declared indignantly, and she would be no party to such scandalous goings-on. Her daughter might be poor and obscure, but she was too good a girl to be the plaything even of a royal duke. Johann was becomingly penitent. He vowed that he loved Émilie with his whole heart, that he was no longer a royal prince but a plain citizen like Herr Stubel himself, and that he asked nothing better of life than to be Émilie's husband. Thus peace was made, Johann was taken into favour again, and within a few weeks he led his beautiful bride to the altar, and took her to his estate near Gmunden, where for a time they led a quiet but ideally happy life together.

When another year had passed thus, the Archduke decided to wear sackcloth no longer. "I claim the right to work," was his constant cry; "and if I am not allowed to do it in my own country I will go out into the world in search of it." In spite of his aged mother's tears and pleadings he formally and finally renounced all his titles and estates, and declared that henceforth he would be known simply as "Johann Orth," a decision in which he had his wife's loyal support. Together they left their Gmunden home, and for a time none knew what had become of them.

Some declared that Johann hired himself out as a workman, in imitation of Peter the Great; others professed that he had been seen, carrying a napkin, in a Berlin restaurant; and others again were equally assured that he worked as a reporter on American papers. Whatever may be the truth

or falsehood of these rumours, it is known that, in the year 1890, the Archduke and his wife were in London, where they were formally remarried, and where Johann Orth passed an examination and secured a navigator's licence. Thus equipped, he went to Hamburg, purchased the *Santa Margherita*, a well-found iron sailing-vessel of about 1300 tons, and, a few weeks later, as owner of the *Santa Margherita*, and accompanied by his wife, he left England on his first voyage to South America with a cargo of cement. Finding no freight for his return voyage, he made Iquique in ballast, and from there he wrote to a friend in Vienna: "My first captain, Sodich, is very ill and must, therefore, remain here. Of my other officers, one I have decided to dismiss on account of incapacity, and to grant leave to another for various reasons. I am my own captain, and must undertake, without officers, the voyage to Valparaiso, around the Horn."

It is said that not only did he lose his officers, but his entire crew was paid off here, and it was with an entirely fresh crew that he put to sea on his perilous voyage round Cape Horn, the narrow seas off which are a graveyard of gallant ships. From the moment that the *Santa Margherita's* masts dipped below the horizon on this voyage, she vanished as completely as if the sea had swallowed her. Not a trace of her or of any soul on board her has been seen, to the knowledge of the world, from that day to this. Up to this time the Archduke had written regularly to his beloved mother, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany. Since the *Santa Mar-*

*gherita* left Iquique not a line from her son ever reached her. Nor has anything since been seen or heard of any member of her crew. The accepted explanation of this mystery was that the vessel had foundered in a storm, and had carried her ill-fated crew to the bottom of the sea, where Johann Orth's secret is preserved until "the day when all things will be revealed."

The Emperor Joseph sent out an expedition on a man-of-war to explore the South American coast in search of the missing ship, among the searchers being the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian crown; but not a solitary survivor, not even a vestige of wreckage, rewarded weeks of search.

The world, however, was by no means content to believe that the career of this remarkable prince had ended thus. The fact that no evidence was ever found to prove that the *Santa Margherita* had been lost, and the known daring, reckless temper of its owner, gave rise to the speculation that, in order to break entirely with his old life, Johann Orth had changed the name of his ship, had painted her another colour, and had altered her rig, to sail the seas anew and unknown. It would be no easy task to render a three-mast ship of the *Santa Margherita's* build proof against recognition. Émilie Stubel, in one of her last letters home, lends some colour to this theory by speaking vaguely of a "no man's island" they hoped to find, where they would live happily ever afterwards.

Before leaving Austria, Johann Orth had deposited his private fortune in a Swiss bank, and through his attorney, Dr von Haberler, drew on it

frequently. By virtue of his power of attorney Haberler, after the *Santa Margherita* had been missing for nearly two years, drew this money. The bank refused to pay it out. The courts decided that, as the death of the depositor was not proved, his power of attorney held good, and the money was consequently paid. On the other hand, Haberler sued fourteen life insurance companies of Hamburg for a sum of about £11,000, for which Johann Orth had been insured. The companies appealed against an order to pay this money, but leave to appeal was refused. The German courts held the loss of the ship and everyone on board her to be proved.

In spite of this decision many persist in believing that the adventurous Archduke has not left his bones in Davy Jones' locker—that he still lives and will some day resume his rightful place in the world, with the wife who has been so faithful to him. And every year brings some fresh rumour to keep this belief alive. There is scarcely a corner in the world in which Johann has not been seen and recognised by one or another. He has been seen fighting gallantly with the Japanese against the Russians; and some declare that he is no other than the brilliant Japanese general, Marshal Yamagata! He was in Chili, according to another rumour, bearing arms against Balmaceda; and George Lacour, a French author of repute, recently published a book in Paris, proving to his own entire satisfaction that Johann Orth is living in Argentina under the guise of a mysterious and elusive Don Ramon.

Some say that he and his wife are leading a

primitive and happy life on a remote island in the Pacific; others that he has been seen recently in the company of his kinsman, the Archduke Louis Salvator, in Mallorca; while, only the other day, it was stated in the papers that he was passenger on board a vessel bound from America to England, that he had been recognised and challenged by a fellow-passenger and had admitted he was in truth Johann Orth, one time Archduke of Austria, and that he was seen, later, walking in the streets of London.

Such are a few of the many rumours which for nearly twenty years have kept Johann's romantic story fresh in the public memory. Elusive as a will o' the wisp, flitting from one quarter of the globe to another, he has become invested with all the haunting mystery of the *Flying Dutchman*, and his story will hold the imagination until he reappears in the flesh or until (which will probably never be) his death is a proved fact.

To her last breath Johann's mother, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, refused to believe that her son was dead. In her castle, Schloss Orth, on the fringe of a Tyrolese forest, she spent the closing years of her life, patiently and confidently awaiting his return. "My son is not dead," she would say to those who offered her sympathy. "I know that he lives and that he will come back to me before I die." His rooms were always kept ready for the wanderer, and through the night a welcoming light burned in a window of the castle to guide him home. But the Grand Duchess died and he never returned. Throughout the Tyrol, too, the loyal mountaineers, to a man, share the same unshaken

faith. "He will come back," they say—"oh yes, he will come back"—and a right royal welcome still awaits his coming.

There are at least two men living who are supposed to know the truth. One is Dr von Haberler, his attorney, who, it is said, hears from him regularly every month. The other is the Baron von Abaco, who was captain of the Royal Bodyguard on the night of the Archduke's disappearance, and was privy, it is supposed, to the plans of his royal friend. Years ago the Baron retired from the world to German New Guinea, where, with two loyal henchmen, he lives on his estate and cultivates rubber and tobacco. He never mentions Europe, and the man who addressed him by his old title would offend him seriously. There he dwells with his secret; and unless the lost Archduke should reappear in the world, the Baron will go to his grave with that secret still untold.



## THE QUEEN OF COURT BEAUTIES

IN all the brilliant pageant of courts no figure has moved with a more queenly beauty and a more captivating grace than Virginie, Countess Castiglione, who for a few years in the middle of last century dazzled the world by her charms and conquered hearts by a glance ; and few have drunk more deeply of life's delights and its bitterness.

A romantic story tells us that this peerless woman was cradled in a farm-house and spent her early years in a rustic environment of cows and hens ; but, in fact, her origin was much more exalted and less romantic. Virginie first opened her beautiful eyes in a Florentine palace, the daughter of the Marquis Oldoini, an Italian diplomat, and his marchioness, one of the most graceful and charming women of her day. Beauty and rank were thus her heritage, and seldom has woman turned them to better account.

As a child she exhibited a rare promise of loveliness and of that indescribable gift of fascination which in later years made her supreme among her sex. She was born to inspire the passion and devotion of men ; and before she had emerged from short frocks she was besieged by wooers. At twelve her beauty was the talk of Florence. When she accompanied her mother to the theatre, her tall, graceful figure, her brilliant eyes, and her exquisite complexion, fresh and fragrant as a half-opened

rose, attracted all eyes to her; and when she walked abroad she was followed by an embarrassing retinue of admirers. She was, even at this early age, by universal assent the most beautiful girl in all Italy.

One day in 1854, so the story is told by Frédéric Loliée, the youthful Count Castiglione was present in London at a reception given by the Duchess of Inverness; and, as he gazed at the galaxy of the beautiful women around him, he said to his friend Count Walewska, "I suppose you do not know what has brought me to London? I have come in search of a wife." "My dear Castiglione," the Count answered; "if that is so you have made a great mistake in leaving Italy. Go back, get an introduction to the Marchioness Oldoini and win her daughter. You will then have the most beautiful wife in Europe." The Count followed this friendly advice; fell hopelessly in love with the fair Virginie the moment he set eyes on her radiant young charms, and after a brief wooing won her consent to be his wife. But the girl's heart was far from accompanying her hand. "I will marry you," she said, "because my mother wishes it. But, remember, I do not love you; I shall never love you; in fact I know I shall always be indifferent to you."

It was under such unpromising conditions that Virginie was led to the altar, an unwilling and unhappy bride, by the Count de Castiglione—young, handsome and rich, but of weak character and dissipated habits. Such a husband could never inspire respect, much less affection, in the proud, strong-willed young beauty. She owed him no

allegiance, and she never gave it. Even before the honeymoon had waned she set the Count at defiance. In vain he implored her to pay the bridal visit, prescribed by custom, to his mother. She refused point-blank. Seeing that appeal and commands were alike useless he determined to conquer by artifice. One day he invited his wife to accompany him on a drive, secretly bidding the coachman to drive to his mother's house. Virginie showed no sign of suspicion until the carriage was crossing the river and her destination became clear. Then, taking off one of her shoes, she flung it into the water, saying triumphantly, "Now, take me back. I can't enter your mother's house barefoot." And back the Count had to take the pretty rebel.

M. Loliée paints a charming picture of Virginie at this period of her life. "Her blue eyes had a magic softness; her brown hair, rich and abundant, clustered round the pure lines of her brow; the arms and bosom had an indescribable grace in their exquisite curves; the dainty dimpled chin, the lovely parted lips, like an opening crimson flower, appear to invite a caress. Even more beautiful, if possible, was her figure, which was faultless in its symmetry, and its grace of outline; while her arms and hands, in their perfect modelling, were the despair of sculptors."

Such was the Countess Castiglione when she stood on the threshold of womanhood, the most peerless of her sex, not only in Italy, but in all Europe; and her personal charm and intelligence were at least equal to her physical perfection. Wife though she now was, she was constantly surrounded by lovers, including King Victor

Emmanuel himself, the most indefatigable of them all, to whom she dispensed her smiles and favours with a charming abandon which drove her husband to distraction. She was a born Queen of Hearts, and right royally she played the *rôle*.

Cavour, Victor Emmanuel's minister, was the first to discover in the Countess other gifts than those of beauty. With her subtle intellect and her rare gift of making men the slaves of her will, she would make an ideal diplomatist; and he had little difficulty in inducing her to go to Paris in this character, to throw her spell over Napoleon and enlist his aid in liberating Italy. It was a mission which made an irresistible appeal to the Countess's ambition. She would be a great force in Europe, the arbiter of national destinies. She had long been weary of her weak-kneed husband, and it was with a light heart that she made the journey to France, to conquer the world.

At Paris she was received with the honours of an empress and the homage due to the loveliest woman in Europe; and among her warmest welcomers was Napoleon himself, who, in his crownless days, had petted her as a child. Her first appearance at the French Court was at a grand ball at the Tuileries, where her reception was such as might well have turned a less well-balanced head.

As she entered, so great was the sensation caused by her superlative beauty and grace, that both dancing and music ceased as if at some magic and mysterious bidding, and in breathless admiration every eye was turned to her. Through the avenue of motionless dancers the Emperor advanced to meet her, and, with a profound obeisance such as

a queen might have envied, kissed her hand and bade her welcome to his Court. The band struck up again and, with Napoleon's arm round her waist, the Countess was soon lost in the whirl of dancers.

All Paris was soon raving over the beauty and elegance of the Italian Countess whose charms so far outshone those of its loveliest women. The men almost fought to win a smile or a word from her lips; the fairest ladies of the Court joined, however reluctantly, in the chorus of adulation; and the people mobbed her in the streets to catch a glimpse of her peerless face. And all this extravagant homage the Countess accepted with a placidity as perfect as herself. None knew better than she how beautiful she was, and none worshipped more ardently at the shrine of her loveliness. She was a queen, by Nature's supreme award, and the world was her subject. Other beautiful women there might be; but the best of them were only fit to be her ministers and her foils.

Great as was the sensation caused by her beauty, she created a still greater sensation by the daring with which she invested it. Remarkable stories are told of some of her appearances at Court functions. To one State ball it is said she went in the character of Salamambo, in draperies so transparent as to startle and shock the least prudish. On another occasion she appeared as "Queen of Hearts," with her hair falling in a glittering cascade to her knees. She wore no corset, we are told, "and the beautiful curves of her bosom, in its proud independence of all artificial support, were left

almost entirely exposed by the light drapery of gauze. Her skirt was raised and caught back, showing the under petticoat; and over both skirt and bodice was thrown a chain of hearts."

It is perhaps little wonder that Napoleon, who was ever a lover of ladies, found such charms, allied to such abandon, irresistible. Cavour had not over-estimated the powers of his fair ambassador; Napoleon was at her feet, an abject suppliant for her favour, eager to prove his affection in any way she chose to dictate. Recalling in later years this crowning period of her conquest, the Countess said, "If I had only gone to Paris earlier, you would have seen an Italian and not a Spaniard sharing Napoleon's Throne." And probably she was right; for Eugènie's fascinations, faultlessly beautiful as she was, were to the Italian's as water to wine, or as the moon to the sun in its dazzling splendour.

Napoleon knew no happiness away from the eyes of his enchantress. At the risk to reputation, and even to his life, he made secret visits to her house in the Rue de la Pompe, spending hours in her company, and passing the intervals in feverish impatience until he could see her again. It was while leaving, after one such visit, that he narrowly escaped the dagger of the assassin. Driving out of her courtyard at an early hour in the morning, three men sprang out of the darkness with daggers raised to kill him. Fortunately the coachman saw the attack, and, lashing his horses, drove furiously away, thus saving the Emperor's life by a margin of seconds.

An even more startling episode is associated

with another of Napoleon's visits to the Countess. Accompanied by his aide-de-camp, General Fleury, and by Griscelli, one of his secret agents, he made his way one night to the Hôtel Beauvau, where madame was expecting him. Mounting the stairs, the Emperor and his aide-de-camp were ushered into the Countess's room by a maidservant—the detective, unseen by the maid, having already taken up his position in a dark recess on the landing. No sooner had the door closed than the maid clapped her hands; a man stole out of an adjacent room and trod stealthily towards the room in which the Emperor and the Countess were closeted. He was about to turn the handle when a blow from behind struck him to the heart and he fell dead on the threshold. Before she could escape Griscelli, who had struck the fatal blow, seized the treacherous maid, locked her in a room, and, in spite of madame's tears and protestations of innocence, carried off the Emperor, whose life his watchfulness and stout arm had saved.

Whether or not the Countess was as innocent as she professed to be of this dastardly attempt to assassinate her lover (a pistol and a poisoned dagger were found on the body of the dead man), or what, if guilty, her motive could be, is not clear. On the following day she was escorted across the frontier, where she spent the next few months, in solitude, in a villa at Turin, secretly railing at Fate, which had brought her career of triumph to such a sudden and ignominious end.

But madame was not the woman to eat out her heart for long in solitary repining. She knew too much of Napoleon and his secrets to be made an

enemy of; and she soon secured her recall to France, to resume her place as queen of beauty and of the Emperor's heart. Her supremacy was now more assured than ever; she dazzled Paris by her charms and shocked it by her unconventionality. The ladies of the Court she treated with a fine indifference, almost contempt; the men were all at her feet.

Every day brought some new story of her daring and eccentricity to feed the gossip of Paris. One day she received her friends in a room draped in black, while she, in startling contrast, was robed in transparent white. One Christmas eve she spent pacing the roof of the Louvre, listening in the moonlight to the clashing of the bells. She invited the world of fashion to a series of *tableaux vivants* in which she exhibited her beauty in the most startling and least conventional poses. Even when she was ill she could not resist this fondness for posing. On one occasion, when her doctor was urgently summoned to her bedside, he found her lying in bed amid billows of laces and costly furs, with jewels flashing in her hair, on neck, arms and hands, in a room full of the most exquisite flowers.

Her admiration of her beauty often, it is said, assumed forms as frank as they were embarrassing. "Would you like to see my arm?" was the startling question she would ask; whereupon, without even waiting for assent, she would draw up her sleeve and expose its faultless outlines to admiration, or she would similarly offer her dainty and beautifully fashioned foot and ankle for inspection. To what extent this self-worship was carried is shown by the following story. She commissioned one of



the greatest artists of France to paint her as Venus, lying on a couch. Under such inspiration the artist surpassed himself and produced a picture so ideally beautiful that the sight of it threw the Countess into a passion of jealousy. "It is more beautiful than I am!" she exclaimed; and, seizing a knife, she slashed at the painted limbs until the canvas, that had so outraged her vanity, was hanging in strips, which she consigned to the flames.

But amid all her social triumphs and love conquests Madame Castiglione never lost sight of her diplomatic mission. Her charms and all her talents were enlisted in its service. She flattered Napoleon, wheedled ambassadors and ministers, and cast her spell over all the most potent political forces in Europe; and, in her achievements, surpassed even Cavour's most extravagant expectations. As she herself says in a letter to her lifelong friend, General Estancelin, "I carried Victor Emmanuel to Rome, and overthrew seven Napoleonic, Bourbon and Papal dynasties . . ."; and there was, no doubt, much truth in her proud boast, "I have created Italy and saved the Papacy."

With the fall of the Empire the Countess's era of splendour and power came to its close. The brilliant crowd among which she had moved as a queen was dissipated, and there was no longer any place for the charming intriguer. Humiliating as her fall was, she could have borne it with resignation, even with indifference, content to live in the memory of her too brief hour of dazzling triumph; but the loss of her beauty she could not bear, and this was fading fast. She found herself losing her glorious hair, her pearly teeth, the perfect contour

of her face. Her figure, which had been the most perfect in the world, was losing all its grace and slightness; and there were those who did not scruple to rejoice openly at the havoc Time was playing with the "Queen of Beauty."

Her powerlessness to stay the ravaging hand of Time was the bitterest drop in her cup of humiliation; but she could at least prevent others from witnessing the decline of her charms. She went less and less into society, and shut herself up more and more from the world. Even her most attached friends she visited only at long intervals. Of one of these visits M. Loliée tells a pathetic story. One day Madame Walewska was told that a lady, who refused to give her name, wished to see her for a moment. When she went to the hall she saw a woman thickly veiled and muffled who, producing a superb bouquet of roses from her black silk draperies, said, "It is I, Nicchia. It is your birthday, and I have brought you a few flowers." "Don't go away," pleaded madame, as her visitor, whose voice she recognised, prepared to depart, "or, at least remove your veil and let me see you again." For a moment the Countess hesitated—dared she show herself, so changed, to her old friend?—and then removing her mantle and her veil she stood revealed. "But you are lovely, as lovely as ever," exclaimed Madame de Walewska enthusiastically. "Do come in and let my guests see you." For the last time the Countess's soothed vanity prevailed; she joined the guests, was flatteringly received, and for a few hours was her old gay, brilliant, conquering self again.

But the next morning her too candid mirror told

its tale. Her beauty had indeed fled, and it was only the pity of her friends that had given it a new and brief resurrection. She lapsed again into her old hopelessness, and determined never to show herself abroad again. She refused to receive any but a few of her most loyal friends who, instead of knocking at the door, announced themselves by signals, when she admitted them—all except General Estancelin, who was free to come and go when he pleased.

Thus the dreary years passed, each robbing her of her beauty, until not a trace of it remained. She had several sumptuous apartments in Paris in which for twenty years and more she never set foot. She had carriages and horses always ready at her bidding, but she never made use of them. Occasionally, in the darkness of night, she would steal out of her room, thickly veiled, and walk to the Rue Castiglione to spend a few moments in gazing at the walls within which she had spent her years of greatest splendour, returning sadly to her apartment in the Place Vendôme. Here she passed her miserable days alone. Day and night her windows were closely shuttered. Every room was hung with dark draperies, which the light of a single low-turned gas-jet only served to make more funereal; and nowhere was there a mirror to remind her of the beauty that had fled.

When at last she saw death coming to release her from her living tomb, she wrote to her friend Estancelin: "Remember my instructions. I want a solitary funeral. No flowers, no church, no one at all. See that nothing is published about me, and return all my portraits." And these instructions

she repeated in her will. For thirty years she had been hidden from the world, and after death she wished to preserve the same secrecy.

The Countess passed away—from an attack of cerebral apoplexy—very quietly during the night of 21st November 1899, and was laid to rest in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. There the curious may see to-day a plain slab of granite which alone marks the spot where the most beautiful woman of her day, the friend of kings and the arbitress of national destinies, sleeps her last sleep.

Her best epitaph, if she had boasted one, might have been written in her own words:—"The Eternal Father Himself did not know the thing He had created when He brought her into the world. He moulded and fashioned her until, when she was complete, He lost His head before His own marvellous work; and He left her in a corner instead of putting her in her true place. Thereupon, He was called away elsewhere, and when He returned—she was not to be found."

## A ROYAL MOUNTEBANK

CAPTIVATING and cruel, supreme scholar and abject slave to the senses, stateswoman and buffoon—such was Christina, Queen of Sweden, the “Sybil” and “Semiramis of the North,” whose career alternately dazzled and disgusted Europe in the seventeenth century and whose life story, surely the strangest that has ever been told of a sovereign lady, still fills its readers with mingled fascination and loathing.

Christina's entry on the stage of life, on which she was destined to play such strange and varied *rôles*, was a disappointment. Her august parents and all Sweden had confidently anticipated a male heir to the throne, for his coming had been heralded by many a prophetic dream and by the voice of the stars; and when, in place of the jubilantly expected heir there came a puny, swarthy, ill-favoured girl-child, there was lamentation alike in Court and cottage. The Queen-Mother, it is said, never recovered from her disappointment, and for years could not look on her unwelcome daughter without aversion.

The child of such strangely contrasted parents could scarcely fail to be remarkable. Her father was Gustavus Adolphus, a fair-haired Scandinavian giant, a man of strong arm and lion heart, terrible in war as he was gentle in peace. His passion for fighting was allied to a taste for letters. He was

soldier and student, dreamer and destroyer; and these diverse qualities were strangely reproduced in the child who was not wanted.

From her mother Christina undoubtedly inherited many weaknesses, and probably not one virtue. Queen Mary indeed seems to have been little removed from the imbecile. She had a mania for gorgeous raiment, revelled in the company of persons of low degree, and surrounded herself with dwarfs and buffoons, while such time as she could spare from these allurements she spent in fits of weeping. Vanity and tears, superstitious observances and imbecile pleasures—of such ingredients was Gustavus' queen composed.

Christina, the child of these oddly contrasted parents, was but six years old when her father died fighting gallantly at Lutzen, in 1632, thus furnishing an occasion for grief which was not lost on his lachrymose queen. Shrouding her rooms in black draperies her Majesty wept day and night, her groans and lamentations echoing through the palace; and her child, who was her unwilling companion, she compelled to weep and moan with her. Happily for Christina's sanity the Chancellor Oxenstiern came to her rescue. He packed the Queen off to a distant castle to weep alone, and took the girl under his care.

Christina spent the next ten years of her life surrounded by learned professors, whose duty it was to educate her for her exalted position; and seldom have teachers had so eager and apt a pupil. In her anxiety to learn she would scarcely allow herself time to eat or sleep, and soon her learning was the talk and wonder of Sweden. Before she

had long entered her teens she had mastered eight languages ; she could quote Greek by the hour ; and her Latin and French compositions were published for the admiration of the world. She discussed theology with bishops, confounded philosophers with her arguments, and ministers with her knowledge of statecraft. Nor was this the sum of her accomplishments ; for she could swear like a trooper, bring down a running hare with a bullet, and was the most skilful and daring horsewoman in the kingdom.

For dress this odd and gifted princess had a profound contempt, and she was equally indifferent to cleanliness ; but her greatest scorn was reserved for her own sex and all that concerned it. She wanted to be a man—and to her last day she was a man, in all but sex.

Though she was small and ill-shapen (one shoulder was higher than its fellow) Christina did not lack personal attractiveness ; and she never looked better than when, with hair flying in the wind, with flushed cheeks and sparkling blue eyes, she was racing madly on horseback across the country. The Swedes were proud of their Christina to a man, and, in her youth at least, not without reason.

That she had many faults, even in girlhood, she herself frankly confesses. She admits that she has a vile temper, is imperious and impatient, sarcastic and contemptuous. She pleads guilty, too, thus early to a “disregard for the proprieties which ought to be observed by her sex.” And herein lay her gravest fault. She had no sense of morality, and revelled in the knowledge.

When, her education finished, Christina took the

reins of government into her own hands, her true character, which had hitherto been concealed under the veil of study, was quick to show itself. Like Catherine the Great, she chose her favourites from among the handsomest of her courtiers or from her subjects of whatever rank, and changed them as lightly as she changed her gowns. Count Magnus of Gardie was one of the first to take her fancy captive—a handsome youth barely of man's estate. She showered dignities and presents on him, made him head of her household, grand treasurer, ambassador and what not, only to dismiss him and call him a "drunkard and a liar" to his face when the dark-eyed Spaniard Pimentelli came on the scene. Pimentelli, in turn, had to give place to a low-born successor in the royal favour; and so on, in bewildering sequence, the reign of each favourite being as supreme as it was short-lived. But such pleasures as these by no means filled Christina's days. She loved to surround herself with the most learned men in Europe—poets, scholars, philosophers—all of whom ministered to her vanity and afforded opportunities for the exercise of her clever brain and tongue. She killed poor Descartes by dragging him out of bed at five o'clock on winter mornings to talk philosophy with her; and scared Huet, later Bishop of Avranches, away by her crushing theological arguments.

And, Queen though she now was, she remained as indifferent to her personal appearance as when a child. "She never combs her hair but once a week," Manneschied records; "and sometimes lets it go untouched for a fortnight. On Sundays her toilet takes about half-an-hour, but on other days it is



despatched in a quarter. Her linen is ragged and much torn." When a bold courtier once ventured to hint at the virtue of cleanliness, her Majesty retorted, "Wash! that's all very well for people who have nothing else to do."

From a discussion on religion or philosophy she would turn to conversation of a nature by no means delicate. She revelled in stories of a questionable character; and when the narrator, from a desire to avoid offending her, substituted allowable for objectionable words, she would, to quote one who knew her, "boldly speak out the words, though they were never so unseemly, which modesty forbids me to write here."

Such in early womanhood was Queen Christina before she gave full rein to those eccentricities and vices which, even then, were stirring into life, and which were, later, to obtain full mastery over her. The change began with the arrival of Bourdelet at the Court of Sweden. The son of a French barber, Bourdelet had had a romantic career before he entered Christina's life. With a slight training as an apothecary he travelled through Europe posing as a doctor, the possessor of wonderful secrets for the cure of all ailments from a bad complexion to a malignant fever. He was gay and witty, could sing and play divinely, and was a past-master of the arts of pleasure. Ladies adored the clever and handsome adventurer: and the Pope himself fell under his spell and would have made a cardinal of him if some shady business in which he had engaged had not compelled a hasty retreat from Italy.

Shortly afterwards he was summoned to Sweden

to practise his medical skill on Christina, who fancied she was at death's door. As a matter of fact she was seriously ill—the result of her years of hard study and neglect of the most elementary rules of health. Bourdelet was quick to see the cause of his royal patient's indisposition. He bade her leave her books and studies and replace them with a life of gaiety; and Christina proved a docile patient. She went at a bound from one extreme to the other; turned her back on scholars, statesmen and study and flung herself into a whirlpool of wild dissipation. She spent her days and nights in dancing and revelry, and made her whole Court follow in her giddy wake. She made grave professors dance jigs, sing comic songs and play the clown, and laughed at their antics until the tears streamed down her cheeks. She laughed in the face of her ministers who wished to see her on affairs of state, and invited them to join in a minuet instead.

Sweden looked on aghast at these strange antics of its beloved Queen. She must be mad, was the general opinion. To Bourdelet she gave the highest offices in the state and the army. She lavished fortunes on the barber's son, the minister of her pleasures, whose impudent and arrogant airs soon became intolerable to the most long-suffering of her subjects; while the whole country groaned under the burden of the taxes which fed her prodigal extravagance. So strong and universal was the resentment against Bourdelet that it became no longer safe for him to walk abroad; and, when he had done all the damage he could, he disappeared, laden with gold and presents and

with a recommendation to the favour of Mazarin, who made an abbé of him.

The loss of her favourite soon had a startling consequence. Christina was weary of her queen-dom and of her impoverished subjects. She yearned to go out into the world to win a wider homage, to dazzle the courts of the Continent; and, summoning her Senate one day in 1654, she announced her abdication of the crown in favour of her cousin, Charles Augustus. The Senate and all Sweden were struck with amazement. Christina, however, was inexorable. Her mind was fully and finally made up and she turned a deaf ear to pleading and protests. She packed up her treasures, dismissed her retinue, had her hair cut short, put on man's clothes, and with a gun on her shoulder—she vowed she was going to fight in Flanders—disappeared.

A few weeks later Christina was travelling in Denmark as the son of the Count of Dolma; and there a curious adventure befell her. While she was staying at an inn she was visited by the Queen of Denmark, who, disguised as a servant, waited on her royal sister of Sweden. "So cleverly did she act her part that Christina had no suspicion and chattered intimately with the polite and attractive serving-maid, talking, among other things, in no complimentary way of his Majesty of Denmark. When Christina left the inn the Danish Queen sent a page after her to inform her that the maid to whom she had spoken so disparagingly of the King of Denmark was none other than Denmark's Queen. On hearing this Christina laughed aloud and exclaimed, 'What!

that servant girl who was standing there all dinner-time was the Queen of Denmark! Well, there has happened to her what often happens to curious people—they make discovery of more things than are agreeable to them. It is her own fault; for, as I have not the gift of divination, I did not look for her under such a dress as that.’ ”

From Denmark the errant Queen made her way to Hamburg with a small escort of men-in-waiting and a few valets, who officiated as her maids, and there she began perhaps the most remarkable royal progress in history. Into each large town on her route she made a state entry, in gorgeous uniform, riding with regal dignity through the principal streets and receiving the salutations of the on-looking crowds and the solemn addresses of the officials with a queenly graciousness; until at one stage or other some mad impulse turned the grave proceedings into a grotesque farce. She would, for instance, make grimaces at the respectfully cheering spectators; interrupt a loyal address with a loud oath or a questionable jest, or burst into a peal of laughter while some dignified personage was greeting her.

The reception over, she would vanish mysteriously, wander from inn to inn hobnobbing with peasants until she felt disposed to resume the splendours of her progress and startle another city with her gorgeous trappings and her mad escapades. At Brussels, where she was royally received, she announced her conversion to the Catholic faith, giving as her sole reason that she was sick to death of the length and prosiness of Protestant sermons! At Innsprück she shocked everyone

present by her flippancy during the ceremony of abjuration; and when this was followed in the evening by a play given in honour of the royal convert, she exclaimed to her hosts, "Gentlemen, it is only fair that you should offer me a comedy, since I have just given you a farce."

At Rome, whither Christina now hastened to flaunt her new faith, she was received with ultra regal honours. Cardinals and bishops, great nobles and ambassadors, went in stately procession to meet her, in their gilded coaches drawn by six richly caparisoned horses, and with retinues decked out in their most splendid trappings; and with them went the fairest and most highly placed ladies of Rome, each with her suite of forty attendants. On this reception the Pope had lavished 1,250,000 crowns, and its preparation had kept hundreds of Roman hands busy for half a year.

Evenmore splendid was the occasion of Christina's visit to the Vatican to receive the Papal welcome and benediction. Rome gave up the day to high festival; the route was lined with thousands of troops and the Catholic Queen made her progress to the booming of cannon, the clashing of bells and the fanfare of trumpets. Astride of a white horse she pranced, with a cardinal at each side, at the head of a procession a mile long.

Christina took Rome by storm. She dazzled it by her wit and shocked it by her indiscretions. She laid down the law to the Pope, coquetted with cardinals, patronised the proudest nobles and inaugurated a reign of revelry which swept the Vatican off its feet. Infected by her example, the entire Sacred College flocked to the theatres nightly.

“The balcony of her box,” says Doran, “was every night crowded by cardinals who looked with edification on the ballerinas, and listened with delight to the exquisitely dressed singing girls, who resorted to Rome at the invitation of Christina.” The etiquette, when she was present, was of the very strictest, the noblest in Rome being compelled to remain uncovered as long as she was in the house. The gay cardinals, who lolled over the balcony in front of her box, alone wore their caps, in allusion to which privilege a paper was one night fixed beneath the balcony, on which was inscribed, “Plenary indulgence for the gentlemen in purple.” Christina was equally zealous in her attendance at the services of her Church, during which she would laugh and joke with her attendants, or make loud comments to the amazement of her fellow-worshippers.

Meanwhile she squandered her money with a lavish hand on a hundred follies and dissipations until, her exchequer exhausted, she was compelled to appeal to the Pope for a loan. And when his Holiness offered her 2000 crowns a month if she would only behave herself, she was furiously indignant, pawned her remaining jewels, and shook the dust of Rome, for the time, off her feet.

From Rome she drifted to France, to repeat her regal receptions and her follies. At every city on her triumphal journey she was greeted with fulsome addresses, and royally entertained. The Duke of Guise, who was sent by the King to act as her escort, describes the Queen at this time as “tall, but somewhat stout, with broad hips, a well-shaped arm, a white and pretty hand. Her bodice, laced behind,

is not straight; her chemise shows above the skirt, which is ill-fastened and awry. She is much powdered and pomatumed; has men's boots, and in point of fact has almost a man's voice and quite a man's ways. Though she is proud and haughty she can be polite, even caressing in manner. She speaks eight languages, and is as learned as our Academy and our Sorbonne put together. Indeed," he concludes, "she is a very extraordinary person."

At Compiègne the "Grande Demoiselle" herself met Christina and together they went to the theatre where, the princess records, "the Queen swore like a trooper, threw her legs about, putting first one, then the other over the arms of her chair; she took attitudes such as I have only seen in the case of Trivelin and Jodelet, the buffoons. She would fall into deep reveries, sigh loudly and then, all at once, come to her senses as if she had awakened from a dream."

All Paris turned out to greet and stare open-mouthed at this remarkable Queen, as she made her entry astride of her enormous white horse. She wore, we are told, a flaming scarlet doublet and a plumed hat, carried pistols at her holster and gaily twirled a light cane. When her Majesty had sufficiently startled Paris and drunk her fill of its doubtful homage she went to visit the King and Queen at Compiègne. What Louis must have thought of his strange guest may be imagined, for at their meeting, Mademoiselle de Motteville says, "her wig was all uncurled and awry, her short skirt showed her man's boots; her complexion made her look like a bold and wild gipsy, and her hands were filthily dirty." And yet, in spite of these unattrac-

tive externals she quickly made a very favourable impression on her royal host, who found her "quite charming, if unconventional."

How unconventional she could be Louis was not long in discovering. Even he was shocked when Christina, in the presence of the whole Court, "flung her legs up on a chair as high as that on which she was seated, and altogether exhibited them a little too freely"; and when she borrowed his valets to perform the most delicate offices for her. But in spite of these and similar unconventionalities, such as her exhibitions of rage, her volleys of oaths and the savage manner in which she attacked her meals, Christina might have long remained a guest at the Court of Louis had she not interfered with his love affairs and urged him to marry Marie Mancini, Cardinal Mazarin's lovely niece, against the strong wishes of his mother. Anne of Austria was the last woman in the world to tolerate such interference with her designs for her son, and Christina was politely but firmly told that her presence was no longer desirable.

Once more the Queen started on her travels. On her journey back to Italy she spent a night at Montargès, where the Grande Mademoiselle paid her a visit, of which she gives the following amusing account. "I was invited to go up alone and found her in bed. A tallow candle stood on the table; a towel twisted round her shaven head, served as a nightcap; her nightgown, which had no collar, was tied by a large knot of flaming yellow ribbon; her sheets only reached half way up the bed, over which an ugly green counterpane was thrown. In this state," adds Mademoiselle, "she was not beautiful."



At Rome Christina's reception was so chilling that she returned to Fontainebleau, where her presence was equally unwelcome, and, as the Court was not there, was allowed to stay for a time in the palace; and it was while at Fontainebleau that the tragic event occurred which has covered Christina's memory with obloquy as long as time shall last.

In her Majesty's retinue were two young Italian nobles, the Marquess Monaldeschi and Count Sentinelli, who were rivals in her fickle affection. Sentinelli was the favourite of the moment; and in his jealous anger the Marquess wrote certain letters, in imitation of his successful rival's handwriting, which contained insulting references to her Majesty. When this act of treachery came to Christina's ears she planned a terrible revenge. She summoned the two men to her presence, Sentinelli bringing two Italian soldiers with him; and, producing the insulting letters, asked Monaldeschi if he recognised them. The Marquess at first denied all knowledge of the letters, and then, pale and trembling, confessed his guilt and, flinging himself at the feet of his royal mistress, implored her pardon. Turning a deaf ear to his entreaties, Christina said to a monk, who had also been summoned to the meeting, "Father, I leave this man to you. Prepare him for death. Minister to his soul"; and without another glance at the cowering Marquess went to her room to gossip light-heartedly with her ladies.

Then followed one of the most terrible tragedies in human history. The monk, as terrified as if he himself had been sentenced to death, went to Christina to plead for the wretched man's life.

She turned away with a laugh and continued her gossiping. Monaldeschi again dragged himself to her feet and besought her by the wounds of the Saviour to have mercy. "I am sorry," was her answer, "but I cannot grant your request." "Force him to make his confession and then kill him," was the fiendish message she sent to Sentinelli.

Then the butchery began, before the Marquess, in choked and anguished voice, had well begun his last confession on earth. The Count pushed him against the wall of the gallery and struck the first blow. The Marquess, who was unarmed, seized the sword and three of his fingers fell to the floor. The two soldiers then joined in the attack; blows rained on the unhappy man, whose shirt of mail but served to prolong the agony of death, until bleeding from a score of wounds he collapsed on the floor. A final thrust from the Count's sword, and the deed—one of the blackest in history—was accomplished. And while her former lover was being butchered, with his death cries in her ears, Christina discussed the latest scandal in the adjoining room, and her gay laughter was the only sound that mingled with the last moan of her victim.

Europe was struck with horror by this inhuman act. It had long shaken its sides with laughter at Christina's eccentricities, and professed to be shocked by her immoralities; but to order her lover's murder and to laugh wantonly while he was done to death was a very different matter. She was a monster, a ghou, unfit to draw the breath of life. When Mazarin sent a messenger to warn her that it would not be safe to show her face in Paris

she sent back an impertinent answer, assuring him that if Monaldeschi were still alive "I should not sleep to-night before seeing that the deed was done. I have no reason to repent." And twenty-five years later she was just as impenitent. "I am in no humour," she wrote, "to justify myself of Monaldeschi's death. This fuss about him seems to me as absurd as it is insolent, Westphalia may think him innocent if it will; to me it is a matter of the utmost indifference."

It was equally a matter of indifference that the whole world now gave her the cold shoulder. "The shaven adventuress," as she was dubbed, treated the contemptuous world with scorn, and went her own erratic way to the end. When Sweden refused her permission to put foot on its shores she turned her horse's head with a laugh and rode away. She intrigued to wrest Pomerania from Sweden by armed force, and to capture the throne of Poland; but all her scheming failed, for none would help her. When the long-suffering Pope withdrew her pension she threatened to sack the Vatican and to depose him. Thus, shunned and execrated by all, Christina spent the last thirty years of her strange life an impoverished pariah; but defiant and impenitent to the last.

When she realised that her end was near she determined to leave the stage of life, on which she had played so many remarkable parts, in a manner that should astonish and impress the world. She had a mortuary robe made "of white brocade, richly embroidered with flowers and gold ornamentation; with trimming and buttons of gold and with a fringe of the same around the bottom of the

skirt"; and, thus prepared for the closing scene, she awaited with a light heart the signal for the dropping of the curtain.

The end came one April day in the year 1659; and if she could have had a posthumous regret at leaving life it must surely have been that she could not see her own obsequies. Now that her career was ended all Rome conspired to send her to her grave under circumstances of ultra regal splendour. Clothed in her gorgeous costume of brocade and gold, with a crown on her head and a sceptre in her hand, her body was laid in state in the Church of Saint Dorothea whose black draperies were illuminated by 300 tapers.

When dusk fell, her coffin, concealed by a violet mantle, edged with ermine, was carried in state to St Peter's. Five hundred monks with lighted tapers led the long procession, followed by artists and scholars and the members of a score of religious bodies, while, following the body, came cardinals and archbishops, lords and equerries, in gilded coaches, drawn by gaily caparisoned horses. And thus brilliantly escorted Christina was laid to rest under the stately dome of the world's greatest cathedral, to await the verdict of posterity.

More than two centuries have gone since Christina's crooked body was thus splendidly laid to rest and her equally crooked soul appeared before its Creator, but historians still wrangle over her memory. Seldom have such great gifts and possibilities been allied to such deplorable defects and failure. Her cleverness, falling little short of genius, and her fascinations are forgotten in the contemplation of the vices which made her the

byword of Europe in her day, and especially of that crowning act of treachery and cruelty which branded her for ever as infamous, a woman with the heart of a fiend.

“Princes,” she herself once said, “resemble those tigers and lions whose keepers make them play a thousand tricks and turns. To look at them you would fancy they were in complete subjection, but a blow from the paw, when least expected, shows that you can never tame that sort of animal.” And Christina was an animal who could never have been tamed. She belonged to the “rabble of kings.”

## A QUEEN WITHOUT A DIADEM

“A NEW *Constellation* has lately made an appearance in the fashionable hemisphere that engages the attention of those whose hearts are susceptible to the power of beauty. The widow of the late Mr F-h-t has in her train half our young Nobility; as the lady has not, as yet, discovered a partiality for any of her admirers, they are all animated with hopes of success.”

So ran a paragraph in *The Morning Herald* of the 27th July 1784, which announced to the world that a new and brilliant star had appeared in the social firmament of London to dazzle the eyes and play havoc with the hearts of men. Just a generation earlier the beautiful Gunnings, “two Irish girls of no fortune, who make more noise than any of their predecessors since the days of Helen,” had taken the town by storm; and many who read the paragraph and remembered the furore caused by the intoxicating charms of the “fair Irish invaders” wondered if they were to have a rival in the lovely widow who already had half the nobility in her train.

Who was she? was the question which sprang to the lips in every coffee-house and at street corners; for the world at large had heard nothing of her until her sudden appearance in the metropolis. And yet, in certain remote districts of England, there were many who had long fallen



MRS. FITZHERBERT.





under the spell of her rare loveliness. As a child, the granddaughter of Sir John Smythe, head of a very old family in Durham, she had captivated all hearts by her beauty and winsomeness; and as she grew to girlhood, "the fairest flower that ever bloomed north of the Tees," to quote an enthusiastic chronicler, she had a hundred love-sick swains in her wake.

"Her abundant hair," says the same writer, "was of a pale gold; her complexion, that of the wild rose and hawthorn; her features exquisitely chiselled; her figure, full of grace." And these physical charms were allied to a sunny disposition, a sparkling wit, and a manner irresistible in its simplicity and its joyous vivacity. Such a prize was not likely to remain long unappropriated; but it was a surprise and a shock to many when she turned a dainty cold shoulder on all her young and handsome lovers, and gave her hand to Mr Edward Weld, a wealthy Dorsetshire squire, who was older than her own father, and on whose knees she had often sat as a child. A year later she had exchanged her bridal veil for widow's weeds, before she had seen her twentieth birthday. In three years more she became the wife of a Mr Thomas Fitzherbert, a man of old family and many acres, only to become a widow again at twenty-five, with a jointure of £2000 a year.

After this second matrimonial misadventure Mrs Fitzherbert spent two years of retirement on the Continent, from which she emerged more beautiful than ever, to captivate London, as we have seen, by a new revelation of female loveliness.

Still young, in the matured bloom of her peerless

beauty, and liberally dowered with gold, it is little wonder that she soon had the world of London at her feet. Before she had been many weeks in town she was hailed as an unrivalled queen of beauty and was able to pick and choose among the coronets at her disposal. But to all her titled wooers she said "no." She had had quite sufficient experience of wedded life to satisfy her, and was by no means disposed to make a third venture, however seductive it might be. She was perfectly happy in her peaceful life on Richmond Hill with her occasional glimpses of the gaiety of the capital.

Even when the Prince of Wales was added to her army of lovers, his wooing did not bring a single flutter to her heart. How and where they first met, the Prince and the fair widow, does not appear to be certainly known. Some say he first fell under the spell of her beauty by the Thames side at Richmond, others that she first dazzled his eyes from Lady Sefton's box at the opera. However this may be, it is certain that, within a very short time of seeing Mrs Fitzherbert, the heir to the throne was her infatuated slave. At this time, we must remember, George was beyond all question one of the handsomest men in England. "He was," we are told, "tall and finely formed; he had a handsome and manly countenance; his leg—and legs were much esteemed in the eighteenth century—was the envy of the beaux; his smile, the desire of all belles; and his bow the most princely in Europe." He was also the acknowledged king of dandies, in an age when dandyism was an art on which fortunes were lavished and to which lives

were dedicated. At one of his Court appearances, we learn, "his coat was of pink silk with white cuffs; his waistcoat of white silk, embroidered with various coloured foil, and adorned with a profusion of French paste; while his hat was ornamented with 5000 beads."

Such was the fascinating and splendid figure that now appeared in the drama of Mrs Fitzherbert's life, in which he was destined to play such a conspicuous and, in the end, tragic part. So far from encouraging her royal lover, Mrs Fitzherbert seems to have treated his advances with indifference and even with coldness. She was not the woman to play the part of light-o'-love to any prince, however handsome and exalted; and, apart from the improbability that his attentions could be honourable, he was a mere boy, many years her junior and not to be taken seriously. But the colder her treatment, the fiercer burned the fire of the Prince's passion.

In her letters she made her attitude towards him abundantly clear. "Meet you!" she writes, in answer to a request to meet the Prince on leaving a certain ball. "What, you?—the Prince of Wales? whose character in the annals of gallantry is too well known for me to suppose that after such a meeting I should have any character at all." "Why," she writes in a later letter, "should you wish for me? There are a hundred much prettier women! Mrs O—— for example—you think her pretty,—she is, indeed, divine! and she has a husband to shield her from the rude attacks of envy. You may enjoy her conversation, and she yours, and malice dare not speak. But *me*, an

unprotected orphan? It will be cruel to pursue the humble MARGHERITA."

The Prince tried in vain to break down the barriers of her modesty; and when she threatened, if he did not cease to persecute her, to withdraw her friendship from him, he broke out thus: "Painful pre-eminence, would that I could lay it aside! or that I might be permitted to introduce as a daughter to her Majesty virtues congenial to her own. To a Prince, who greatly needs it, so bright an example. To my subjects, so amiable a lady. Vain delusion! I know—I regret the impossibility. Deprive me not of your friendship, but try to give comfort to that heart which is all your own."

To such desperation was the Prince at last driven by the hopelessness of his suit that he threatened more than once to take his life if she refused to make it worth the keeping; and on one occasion he seems to have made an attempt to execute his threat. One day, as Lord Stourton tells the story, "Keith, the surgeon, Lords Onslow and Southampton, and Mr Edward Bouverie arrived at the house in the utmost consternation, informing her that the life of the Prince was in imminent danger, that he had stabbed himself, and that only her immediate presence would save him. She resisted all their importunities, saying that nothing should induce her to enter Carlton House. She was afterwards brought to share in the alarm; but, still fearful of some stratagem derogatory to her reputation, insisted upon some lady of high character accompanying her as an indispensable condition. The Duchess of Devonshire was selected.

They four drove from Park Street to Devonshire House, and took her along with them. She found the Prince pale and covered with blood. The sight so overpowered her faculties that she was deprived almost of all consciousness. The Prince told her that nothing would induce him to live unless she promised to become his wife, and permitted him to put a ring round her finger. I believe a ring from the hand of the Duchess of Devonshire was used upon the occasion, and not one of his own. Mrs Fitzherbert being asked by me whether she did not believe that some trick had been practised, and that it was not really the blood of his Royal Highness, answered in the negative, and said that she had frequently seen the scar, and that some brandy and water was near his bedside when she was called to him on the day he had wounded himself."

It was only after Mrs Fitzherbert had returned home after this dramatic and tragic experience and was able to review it in cool blood that she realised how she had been made the victim of a despicable trick and that the marriage had been but a mock ceremony which could have no binding effect. Then her pity gave place to a fierce indignation, and she wrote to Lord Southampton a letter of bitter reproach for the cowardly conduct of himself and his colleagues. The following day she fled to the Continent to try to forget in foreign travel an experience so insulting and humiliating, and to escape from the further persecutions of her high-placed lover.

When George heard of her flight his grief and rage were uncontrollable. Mrs Fox told Lord Holland

that he “came down to Chertsey more than once to talk with her and Mr Fox on the subject; that he cried by the hour, that he testified to the sincerity and violence of his passion and his despair by the most extravagant expressions and actions—rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forgo the Crown and all his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America.”

He vowed that he would follow her to the ends of the earth; but he could not leave England without the King’s permission, and this his father point-blank refused to give, in spite of his tears and pleading. George III. had seen more than enough of the consequences of such ill-placed affection in the case of two of his brothers, and he would not tolerate it for a moment in his son, and successor on the throne. Thus foiled, George sent messengers racing over the Continent in search of the fair fugitive, and when at last she was discovered in Holland “he wrote pages and pages of passionate pleadings, of heartrending appeals, of prayers for her aid, of threats of self-destruction if she remained obdurate—of everything, in short, that could touch or move the heart of a susceptible woman.”

Such importunity as this, as might be expected, was not without effect on the tender-hearted woman who, no doubt, had a warm place in her heart for her impetuous worshipper. She began to relent; and, from conceding that “she would at least never marry any other man,” at last consented to wed the Prince, on being assured that the King would place

no obstacle in the way, and "on conditions which satisfied her conscience, though she could have no legal claim to be the wife of the Prince."

Thus it came to pass that one December day in 1785 she reappeared at her house in Park Lane; little dreaming that, while preparations for the wedding were being hurried on, the man to whom she had at last yielded was assuring Fox that there were no grounds whatever for the rumours of his projected marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert, "which have been so malevolently circulated."

The marriage ceremony was performed in Mrs Fitzherbert's drawing-room in Park Street, Park Lane, on the 15th December by the Rev. Robert Burt, a youthful curate, whose services had been secured by a fee of £500 and liberal promises of future preferment. The Prince came to his nuptials on foot from Carlton House, attended by the Hon. Orlando Bridgman, who kept guard, during the ceremony, outside the drawing-room door; Mr Errington, Mrs Fitzherbert's uncle, gave the bride away, and he and her brother, Jack Smythe, acted as witnesses. Thus secretly and fearfully Maria Fitzherbert and George, Prince of Wales, knelt side by side and repeated the vows which made them man and wife.

For a year or more the Prince and his bride were ideally happy in their union. They were inseparable; and, as was only natural, their intimate relations gave rise to universal gossip and to speculation as to the nature of the tie which linked them so closely together. Meanwhile the Prince's finances were going from bad to worse, and it became necessary to bring them under the notice of Parlia-

ment, a proceeding which caused the Prince the utmost alarm. He was on the horns of a terrible dilemma. On the one side more money was an absolute necessity to him; on the other, his marriage must at any cost be kept secret, for in making a Papist his wife he had forfeited his right to the crown.

In this predicament, with characteristic cowardice, he induced his friend Fox to declare to the Commons that the report of his marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert was "a monstrous invention, a low malicious falsehood"; and on the strength of this assurance his debts were paid and he received an addition of £10,000 a year to his Civil List income. On the following morning, Lord Stourton tells us, he called on Mrs Fitzherbert, "taking hold of both her hands and caressing her, said, 'only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife! Did you ever hear of such a thing?'" Mrs Fitzherbert made no reply, but changed countenance and turned pale."

When Mrs Fitzherbert told him that after such an act of treachery she could no longer live with him, he assured her that he had never authorised Fox to make any such statement, and that it should be publicly contradicted; and, a few days later, Sheridan, at the Prince's request, made a statement to the House which, while not acknowledging his marriage, left his hearers to infer that Mrs Fitzherbert was at least not the Prince's mistress.

Peace thus restored by a double act of disloyalty, the latter little less contemptible than the former, Mrs Fitzherbert resumed relations with her cowardly



husband, relations on which the following extract from Mr Raikes' diary throws a significant light :—  
“It was the fashion in those days to drink very hard, and Mrs Fitzherbert never retired to rest till her royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say that often, when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence under the sofa, when the Prince, finding the drawing-room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and, searching about the room, would at last draw forth the trembling victim from her place of concealment.”

That there was, however, another and more amiable aspect to the Prince's character is shown by the evidence of the sixth Earl of Albemarle, who, as a child, was a frequent visitor at Mrs Fitzherbert's house. There he often saw the Prince of Wales, of whom he draws an attractive picture. He describes him “as a merry good-humoured man, tall, somewhat portly, with laughing eyes, pouting lips, and a nose which, very slightly turned up, gave a peculiar poignancy to the expression of his face.

“No sooner,” says the Earl, recording these childish memories, “was his Royal Highness seated in his arm-chair than my young companion (a daughter of her dear friend, Lady Horatia Seymour, whom Mrs Fitzherbert had adopted) would jump upon one of his knees, to which she seemed to claim a prescriptive right. Straightway would arise an animated talk between ‘Prinny’ and ‘Minnie’ as they respectively called themselves. As my father was in high favour with the Prince

at this time, I was occasionally admitted to the spare knee and to a share in the conversation, if conversation it could be called in which all were talkers and none listeners."

That Mrs Fitzherbert was on the whole fairly happy with her royal husband, in spite of his dissolute habits, his infidelity and his treachery, there is no reason to doubt; but such happiness as was hers was constantly clouded by the Prince's financial embarrassments, which at times were so great that, on one occasion, after they had returned to London from Brighton, they could not muster five pounds between them. It was this growing mountain of debt which at last compelled the Prince to marry Caroline of Brunswick, an alliance which was so repugnant to him that he had to nerve himself for the wedding ceremony by liberal draughts of brandy.

"My brother told me," the Duke of Bedford records, "the Prince was so drunk that he could scarcely support him from falling. He told my brother that he had drunk several glasses of brandy to enable him to go through the ceremony. There is no doubt that it was a *compulsory* marriage." During the ceremony the Prince shed maudlin tears when the Archbishop of Canterbury, after repeating the words relative to "any person knowing of a lawful impediment," laid down the book and looked earnestly at the King as well as at the royal bridegroom. The Prince's reward for this loveless marriage was that his debts were once more discharged and his income was raised to £100,000 a year.

George had not long been wedded to his uncon-

genial Brunswick bride when he expressed a strong desire to return to his "wife in the eyes of God," whom he declared he loved more passionately than ever; but Mrs Fitzherbert would not listen to his pleading. Even when the King and Queen, with other members of the royal family, begged her to be reconciled to the Prince, she would only consent on condition that the Pope recognised the validity of her marriage to him. But when this high sanction was obtained, she became once more a loyal and loving wife to her recreant spouse. The eight years that followed this reconciliation were, she always declared, the happiest of her life. George was devoted to her; his royal relatives treated her with affection, and the world at large paid her the respect due to the lawful wife of the heir to the throne.

But these halcyon days, with a husband so inconstant, could not last for ever. George's fickle affection was never satisfied with one object for its exercise, and his amours with one Court lady or another must have caused Mrs Fitzherbert many an unhappy hour. The final rupture came when he fell under the spell of the beautiful Lady Hertford. In his new infatuation his devotion to his wife was changed to coldness and neglect. He would, we are told, pass part of the morning with her at her house in Brighton, and would ignore her altogether in the pavilion in the evening, for fear of offending the rival lady. The climax came when Mrs Fitzherbert presented herself at a State dinner to Louis XVIII., and asked the Prince where she was to sit. "You know, Madam, you have no place," was the contemptuous answer; to which

Mrs Fitzherbert retorted with dignity, "None, sir, but such as you choose to give me." This crowning insult decided Mrs Fitzherbert to have done with a husband so cowardly and so inconstant. With the consent of the King and other members of the royal family she finally closed her connection with the Prince and went to Brighton, with an annuity of £6000, to spend the rest of her days in retirement.

Nineteen years later George died, after occupying the throne for ten years, his last request being that he should be buried in the night-clothes he was then wearing. "Almost immediately after he had breathed his last," Lord Albemarle records, "the Duke of Wellington, his executor, arrived at Windsor Castle, and was shown into the room in which the King lay. Left alone with the lifeless form of his late Sovereign, the Duke approached the bed, and then discovered round the King's neck a very dirty and much-worn piece of black ribbon. This the Duke, as he afterwards acknowledged, was seized with an irrepressible desire to draw out. When he had done so he found attached to it the jewelled miniature of Mrs Fitzherbert, which sufficiently accounted for the strange order given by the King about his burial."

Thus King George carried to the grave the picture of his "beloved and adored wife, the wife of my heart and soul," as he described Mrs Fitzherbert in his will—the wife whom he had loved so well and treated so ill. And that this was his wish is proved by the direction written some time before his death, that he should be laid to rest "with the picture of my beloved wife, Maria Fitz-

herbert, suspended round my neck with a ribbon, as I used to wear it when I lived, and placed right upon my heart."

For seven years Mrs Fitzherbert survived her husband, winning the love of all who knew her by her sweetness and her charity, and dying at Brighton on the 29th March 1837 at the advanced age of eighty-one. "She was not a clever woman," says Greville, "but of a very noble spirit, disinterested, generous, honest and affectionate, greatly beloved by her friends and relations, popular in the world and treated with uniform distinction and respect by the Royal family." To the last she retained traces of the beauty which had conquered so many hearts. "I remember well," the Hon. Grantly Berkeley says, "her delicately fair, yet commanding features and gentle demeanour. That exquisite complexion she maintained, almost unimpaired by time, not only long after the departure of youth, but up to the arrival of old age; and her manner, unaffected by years, was equally well preserved." She was, in short, to the last, "a woman who needed but a diadem to make her a Queen."



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